

JOHN GOWER'S RHETORIC

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# John Gower's Rhetoric

*Classical Authority, Biblical Ethos, and Renaissance  
Receptions*

GEORGIANA DONAVIN

BREPOLS

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This book is dedicated to  
Robert J. Meindl and to Eve Salisbury,  
the former having prepared me for this work  
even before I knew my own academic path,  
and the latter sustaining me in it  
over our many years of collaboration.



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I began research on the Newberry manuscript of the *Confessio*, some of which is shared in the Coda.

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## Translations

All translations are mine unless noted otherwise. For the *Visio Anglie* and *Cronica Tripartita*, I have used A. G. Rigg's beautiful rendering into English. See David R. Carlson, ed., *John Gower: Poems on Contemporary Events*, trans. by A. G. Rigg (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2011). For various sections of the *Vox Clamantis* appear Robert J. Meindl's translations of Books 3, 5, and 6 as they are posted on The Gower Project Translation Wiki.

# Abbreviations

Ad Her	<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>
CA	<i>Confessio Amantis</i>
CB	<i>Cinkante Balades</i>
CrT	<i>Cronica Tripartita</i>
DE	Dedicatory Epistle to Arundel
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
MO	<i>Mirour de l'Omme</i>
PN	<i>Poetria Nova</i>
RCD	'Rex Celi Deus'
VA	<i>Visio Anglie</i>
VC	<i>Vox Clamantis</i>



# Introduction

John Gower has been called ‘the paradigmatic author’ of late medieval England.<sup>1</sup> This book investigates the discursive paradigms that Gower obtained from classical and medieval rhetoric, refashioned for his own purposes, and gifted to renaissance authors who imitated him. Although Gower everywhere denounces curious figures of speech deflecting the truth,<sup>2</sup> he proclaims his interest in rhetoric in so many ways — by naming the founders of the field, citing prominent textbooks, praising a trustworthy ethos, admiring Cicero’s oratory, and more. In Book 7 of the *Confessio Amantis*, as Gower defines the field according to Aristotelian theory, Augustinian theology, and Ciceronian style, he makes his long time reliance on the discipline explicit by calling rhetoric the architectonic principle of all discourse.<sup>3</sup> ‘Rethorique’ is, as he claims there, a gift from God that begs to be used responsibly. While it is impossible to know where Gower received lessons in rhetoric — and Christopher Cannon is surely right that it would be a ‘perversity’ to attempt a reconstruction of Gower’s education in the *trivium* out of uncertain evidence — <sup>4</sup> we can (like Cannon) excavate late medieval English instruction in the language arts to deduce how Gower constructed his many forms and styles of writing.<sup>5</sup> If Gower gained a reputation for elocution — Stephen Hawes

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<sup>1</sup> Robert R. Edwards, *Invention and Authorship in Medieval England* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2017), p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Galloway takes Gower’s protests against overly embellished language to be a denial of rhetoric. See Andrew Galloway, ‘The Account Book and the Treasure: Gilbert Maghfeld’s Textual Economy and the Poetics of Mercantile Accounting in Ricardian Literature’, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 33 (2011), 109. I shall argue that Gower makes distinctions concerning the kinds of rhetoric he can ethically embrace.

<sup>3</sup> Rita Copeland explains how Gower deviates from his important source, Brunetto Latini’s *Treasure*, in lifting rhetoric above grammar and logic to create an epistemic category for discourse. See Rita Copeland, ‘Lydgate, Hawes, and the Science of Rhetoric in the Late Middle Ages’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 53 (1992), 57–82 (67–68).

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Cannon, *From Literacy to Literature: England, 1300–1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 9. Eric Stockton pointed out the lack of information on Gower’s schooling decades ago. Eric Stockton, Introduction, in *The Major Latin Works of John Gower: The Voice of One Crying and the Tripartite Chronicle*, trans. by Eric Stockton (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Cannon (*From Literacy to Literature*) argues that late medieval English authors learned compositional strategies from grammar textbooks: ‘[s]choolboys in the fourteenth century

lauding Gower's 'sentencyous dewe', William Dunbar his 'goldyn pennis', and John Skelton his 'garnished ... Englysshe'<sup>6</sup>, — then an investigation of rhetorical practices in Gower's trilingual poetry will reveal what launched that reputation.

During Gower's own time, the larger purpose for studying rhetoric remained its civilizing force, as Cicero's famous myth of the origin of rhetoric, lifting humankind out of brutishness, depicts.<sup>7</sup> The ability to form and shape discourses was key to accessing and participating in medieval culture, whether the student focused on the basic composition skills that enabled trade, the complex formulations of Chancery documents, the modes of preaching, or models for poetry. In Brunetto Latini's Ciceronian *Tresor*, rhetoric is a skill crucial to governing oneself and one's communities: it was essential, therefore, for princes.<sup>8</sup> Concerning the divine ruler of all, St Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* and the medieval arts of discourse that taught Catholic oratory make clear that rhetorical ability, like rationality, is one way in which humanity reflects God's image and embodies the inventive power of the Word. Through rhetoric, human beings form societies ruled by God's laws and perpetuated by the Word. Rhetoric, then, controls human hierarchies both worldly and spiritual, and just as God forms the universe with the Word, poets such as Gower deploy rhetorical teachings to build their own creations.

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did not need to consult the *artes* to learn poetry's rules, however [much emphasis there has been on Geoffrey of Vinsauf, or other masters], since the basic grammars provided their own detailed accounts of poetic technique' (70). According to Cannon, Genius's rhetoric of teaching in the *Confessio* derives from the textbooks for these basic lessons that construct a relationship between teacher and student in their simple *dicta* of Latin principles (117). From the *Confessio Amantis*, Cannon points out, Gower draws from these textbooks in the following way: from the *Achilleid* the stories of Achilles and Chiron (4, ll. 1963–2013) and Achilles and Deidamia (5, ll. 2961–3202); from Matthew of Vendôme's *Tobias* the exemplum of Tobias and Sara (7, ll. 5307–71); from the elegiac *Romulus* (a collection of fables similar to those of Avianus) the fable of the Mouse and the Mountain (7, ll. 3553–75) (162). 'Even when Gower does not take the stories he tells in the *Confessio Amantis* from school texts', Cannon writes, 'he pieces that advice together as the *Confessio* from a set of narratives he takes from other texts' (195). In *John Gower's Rhetoric*, the grammar master John of Garland, along with other less recognized authors will emerge as important contributors to Gower's multilingual rhetorical practices.

- 6 Stephen Hawes, *The Pastime of Pleasure: A literal reprint of the earliest complete copy* (1517), with variant readings from the editions of 1509, 1554, and 1555, together with introduction, notes, glossary, and indexes, ed. by William Edward Mead, EETS, os no. 173 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), l. 1317; William Dunbar, *The Goldyn Targe*, in *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. by James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), l. 268; John Skelton in the *Garland of Laurel*, l. 387. See Siân Echard, 'Introduction: Gower's Reputation' in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 1–22.
- 7 Cicero, *De Inventione*, trans. by H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), 1.2.2.
- 8 Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres Dou Tresor*, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies (Binghamton, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003).



*John Gower's Rhetoric: Classical Authority, Biblical Ethos, and Renaissance Receptions* is the first book-length study to consider the poet's deployment of rhetorical traditions across his trilingual corpus. It nevertheless relies on many articles, essays, chapters, and dissertations examining Gower's rhetoric, as well as books exploring the language and poetics of late medieval poetry. Modern scholarship on Gower and rhetoric began in the early twentieth century in response to John M. Manly's argument that Chaucer learned the figures of speech from the *Poetria Nova* and the *artes poetriae*.<sup>9</sup> Making the same case for Gower, Robertson B. Daniels's unpublished dissertation at Yale initiated the debate over the poet's familiarity with rhetorical traditions. Rebutting both Manly and Daniels, James J. Murphy, who made the important discovery that the *Confessio Amantis* supplies the first discussion of rhetoric in English, thought Gower's treatments of the discipline uninformed; Murphy debunked the notion that Gower possessed rhetorical handbooks such as the *artes poetriae* or expertise in the field. In contrast, defending the medieval poet's knowledge of the *trivium*, Masayoshi Itô observed Gower's citations of the rhetoric masters and the stylistic flourishes that resulted from studying them.<sup>10</sup> Even before this dispute had gained steam, a most perceptive literary critic in Germany, Maria Wickert, was examining another set of medieval rhetorical instructions — the *artes praedicandi* — and searching less for direct references to the rhetoric masters in Gower and more for the source of the *Vox Clamantis*'s sermonic tone.<sup>11</sup> As acceptance of Gower's immersion in rhetoric instruction took hold, Götz Schmitz contributed valuable insights on the ethics and efficacy of the *Confessio Amantis*'s commentary on eloquence.<sup>12</sup>

A watershed moment occurred in the 1990s when Rita Copeland's *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* included a chap-

9 John M. Manly, *Chaucer and the Rhetoricians*, Warton Lecture on English Poetry, vol. 17 (London: British Academy, 1926).

10 Robertson B. Daniels, 'Figures of Rhetoric in John Gower's English Works', Yale University Diss (1934). James J. Murphy, 'Chaucer, Gower and the English Rhetorical Tradition', Stanford Diss (1956); James J. Murphy, 'John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and the First Discussion of Rhetoric in the English Language', *Philological Quarterly*, 41 (1962), 401–11. James J. Murphy, 'A New Look at Chaucer and the Rhetoricians', *Review of English Studies*, 15 (1964), 1–20; Masayoshi Itô, 'Gower's Knowledge of *Poetria Nova*', *Studies in English Literature*, 162 (1975), 3–20.

11 Maria Wickert, *Studien zu John Gower* (Cologne: University of Cologne Press, 1953). For this text in English translation, see Maria Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, trans. by Robert J. Meindl, 2nd edn (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2016). For Wickert's treatment of the *artes praedicandi*, see pp. 74–98.

12 Götz Schmitz, 'Rhetoric and Fiction: Gower's Comments on Eloquence and Courtly Poetry' in *Gower's Confessio Amantis: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Peter Nicholson (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), pp. 117–42.

ter on Gower's rhetorical revisions of classical literature.<sup>13</sup> Not many years before, R. F. Yeager's *John Gower's Poetic* had appeared, identifying the pacifying harper Arion as a model for many of Gower's narrators.<sup>14</sup> With these probing analyses of how Gower's purposes rely upon rhetorical or poetic theory, the scene was set for a variety of investigations into Gower's approaches to the discovery, arrangement, and style of his verses: investigations such as David Coley's into the politics of Gower's language, Edwin Craun's into pastoral rhetoric, Matthew Irvin's into literary *personae*, A. J. Minnis's or Dhira Mahoney's into the composition of prologues, J. Allan Mitchell's into rhetorical cultures, Jonathan Newman's into the function of logic, Steele Nowlin's into affective invention, Diane Watt's into gendered discourses, my own into the *Confessio*'s portrayal of rhetoric in action, and many more.<sup>15</sup> Kim Zarins's chapter for the *Routledge Companion to John Gower* on research into the poet's deployment of rhetoric aptly summarizes the main issues and the state of the field.<sup>16</sup>

Responding to this context, as well as to imperatives to consider the trilingual nature of the poet's oeuvre, *John Gower's Rhetoric* will argue that a tripartite concept of rhetoric emphasizing Aristotelian pathos, the Christian Word, and a style built upon reiterative, straightforward expressions is evident across a wide variety of Gower's poems. Gower mines his oratorical principles from the rhetorical treatises of Aristotle, Cicero,

13 Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 202–20.

14 R. F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for a New Arion* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990).

15 David K. Coley, *The Wheel of Language: Representing Speech in Middle English Poetry, 1377–1422*, Medieval Studies (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2012); Edwin Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 113–56; Matthew W. Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower: Politics and Personae in the Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013); Dhira B. Mahoney, 'Gower's Two Prologues to *Confessio Amantis*', in *Re-visioning Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Ashville, NC: Pegasus, 1998), pp. 17–37; A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 177–90; J. Allan Mitchell, 'John Gower and John Lydgate: Form and Norms of Rhetorical Culture', in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture, C. 1350–C. 1500*, ed. by Peter Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 569–84; Jonathan M. Newman, 'The Rhetoric of Logic in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* Book 7', *Mediaevalia et Humanistica*, 38 (2012), 37–57; Steele Nowlin, *Chaucer, Gower, and the Affect of Invention* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2016); Diane Watt, 'Literary Genealogy, Virile Rhetoric, and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', *Philological Quarterly*, 78 (1999), 389–415; Georgiana Donavin, 'Rhetorical Gower: Aristotelianism in the *Confessio Amantis*'s Treatment of "Rethorique"', in *John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts*, ed. by Malte Urban (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 155–73.

16 Kim Zarins, 'Gower and Rhetoric', in *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*, ed. by Ana Sáez-Hidalgo, Brian Gastle, and R. F. Yeager (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 37–55.

and Martianus Capella; with Augustine, Bede, and the authors of the *artes praedicandi*, he shows faith in the Bible's ability to persuade; among medieval teachers of the *trivium*, he adheres to John of Garland and develops a concept of Marian rhetoric from the *artes poetriae*; with the masters of the *artes dictaminis*, he deploys verbal structures that appeal to target audiences. Through this multiplicity of models and instructions, Gower carves out a rhetorical theory and practice that is founded upon the creative capacities of the Word, a faith that the Word manifested in human speech can channel unregulated emotions toward rational conclusions and beliefs, and a habit of repeating expressions imbued with the truthful Word, often in a plain style.

While the scholars already mentioned and many others have noted Gower's formation in rhetorical theory and practice, no one until now has explored the way that Gower's 'Rethorique' influences poems in all three languages. This assessment is crucial to explaining similar discursive approaches in his French, Latin, and Middle English poems and to uncovering the frameworks supporting the poet's purposes. With polyglot invention, arrangement, and style — or 'active heteroglossia', in the phrase coined by Diane Watt<sup>17</sup> — Gower, for instance, imports advice from the *ars dictaminis* for French ballades, Latin political poems, and Middle English narratives or directions from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* for the Marian petitions in the *Mirour*, *Visio*, and *Confessio*. Within various linguistic and generic conventions, the epistolary arrangements open channels for subordinated speakers, and the petitions guide both speaker and hearer from emotional chaos to reason. Gower created and sharpened these rhetorical methods by purposefully practising them across linguistic traditions. In *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism, and Medieval Literature*, Jonathan Hsy points out that medieval identities and textual strategies often spring from sites where languages meet and interconnect, especially in urban environments such as Gower's London and Southwark, where the opportunity for language crossings is intensified.<sup>18</sup> As Hsy sums it up, 'Gower often articulates his poetic identity across linguistic difference',<sup>19</sup> and *John Gower's Rhetoric* will demonstrate that the same is true for the poet's articulation of his rhetorical practice.<sup>20</sup> The poet's own claim that the *Confessio Amantis* speaks in Anglo-Saxon Hengist's tongue with

17 Diane Watt, *Amoral Gower: Language, Sex, Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 24.

18 Jonathan Hsy, *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism, and Medieval Literature* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013).

19 Hsy, *Trading Tongues*, p. 116.

20 See, for instance, Itô's discussion of similar figures of speech across Gower's corpus. Itô, *John Gower*, pp. 246, 259, 261.

the help of Carmentis, inventor of Latin letters, helps personify linguistic cross-fertilization in the making of rhetorical and poetic texts.<sup>21</sup>

To project his multilingual rhetoric, Gower often fashions an ethos based in biblical types, imitating the voices of saints who are particularly dear to contemporary English rulers and people alike: John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, and the Virgin Mary — all members of the Holy Family, two of them identified by the poet as his namesakes. A consideration of Gower's saintly orators complements scholarship on the *vox dei* / *vox populi* in Gower's poems as well as Matthew Giancarlo's discussion of the *vantparlour*, or the Common's speaker.<sup>22</sup> While Gower certainly invokes the voice of the people as an expression of God's will and fashions political orators, he also imitates the Evangelist in curating the Virgin's story in the *Mirour*, preaches as the Baptist and Evangelist in the *Vox*, and lauds Marian orators in the *Confessio*, to name a few examples. In several poems, Gower explicitly identifies the biblical source for his narrative voice, claiming (for instance) the Evangelist as a muse in the *Visio Anglie*. Gower's use of biblical *personae* reflects what David Lawton has elegantly called 'public interiorities', texts and authorized discourse that inhabit acculturated individuals and become individualized when appropriated and rearticulated.<sup>23</sup> As Lawton points out, in the fourteenth century, such voicing often involves movement from one language to another.<sup>24</sup> Gower's recontextualization in French, Latin, or Middle English of words and tones associated with the Holy Family in the Vulgate as well as in popular vernacular texts allowed the poet to bond with a pious English audience that would have heard the Baptist's hortatory preaching, the Evangelist's apocalyptic dream-visioning, and the Virgin's insistence on humility in sermons, liturgies, and lyrics. This audience, as Lynn Arner has shown, included the artisan class as well as Gower's gentle peers.<sup>25</sup> A biblical ethos conveyed by the Saints John and the Virgin also enabled Gower to approach England's highest nobility and regency — Richard II who claimed the Baptist as his special patron and Henry IV who was anointed with holy oil supplied by the Virgin — with a moral authority endowed

21 Siân Echard, 'With Carmen's Help: Latin Authorities in the *Confessio Amantis*', *Studies in Philology*, 95 (1998), 1–40; Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, pp. 43–45.

22 For a summary and discussion of the *vox dei*/*vox populi* in Gower, see Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, pp. 33–34; Matthew Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 115.

23 David Lawton, *Voice in Later Medieval English Literature: Public Interiorities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 8. Lawton makes a compelling case that the Apostle Paul in his epistles constructs a paradigmatic Christian voice (13–21). Lawton calls the narrators that Gower constructs a 'middel weie' between a 'personal' and 'common' voice (p. 73).

24 Lawton, *Voice in Later Medieval English Literature*, p. 9.

25 Lynn Arner, *Chaucer, Gower, and the Vernacular Rising: Poetry and the Problem of the Populace after 1381* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), pp. 17–45.

by those closest to Jesus. Gower's narrative ventriloquizing of these prominent biblical figures evinces a special understanding of the links in his own time between affiliation with the Holy Family and rhetorical ethos.

Gower's biblical speakers are capacious, embracing and expressing types of discourse that were thought to be opposed in classical rhetorical theory, for instance narratives intended for judicial argument versus those told for aesthetic pleasure.<sup>26</sup> While the former demand a persuasive orator who is knowledgeable about pertinent facts and the law, the latter require an articulate narrator who can represent fictions in clear and appealing language. Yet, as Kathy Eden acknowledges, proofs common to both kinds of oration are necessary for the *fabula* that the *De inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium* so carefully separated from courtroom debate. Scenes of discovery such as those that play out in the *Cronica's* revelations of Richard II's malfeasance or the *Confessio's* tales of family reunion require not only artistically crafted suspense, but also compelling evidence of the discovery's validity. Eden writes: 'Generally speaking, these scenes accomplish a change from ignorance to knowledge concerning some crucial aspect of [a] plot [...] To dramatize this change, moreover, the [author] relies on the very same instruments of proof available to the forensic orator.'<sup>27</sup> Gower's epiphanic episodes depend upon both artistic (ethos, pathos, logos) and inartistic (witnesses, laws, documentation) proofs, which lend these incidents a heightened persuasiveness — and it is often the biblical orator who offers these confirmations. Robert R. Edwards credits John of Garland's *Parisiana Poetria*, a textbook that will be discussed in connection to Gower's Marian rhetoric, with collapsing the distinctions between judicial and non-judicial rhetoric and between actual and uncertain deeds to allow for both history and fiction to function in literary persuasions.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps following Garland, Gower identifies saintly *personae* such as John the Baptist who resort to both legal argument about real cases (condemning a 'brood of vipers' according to God's decree) and also to memorable comparative fictions (likening his own inferiority to Christ to an unworthiness to untie the saviour's sandals).<sup>29</sup> Through Baptist-like preaching in the *Vox* and elsewhere (as Conrad Van Dijk and other scholars have shown), Gower relishes discussions of law, lawyers,

26 Cicero, *De inventione*, 1.19.27 and *Ad Her.*, 1.8.13. See the discussion in Robert R. Edwards, *Ratio and Invention: A Study of Medieval Lyric and Narrative* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1989), pp. 75–76.

27 Kathy Eden, *Poetic and Legal Fiction in the Aristotelian Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 10.

28 When paraphrasing Cicero's definition of *fabula* — 'nec res veras nec verisimiles' [a narrative with neither true nor versimilar things], Garland adds the dictum from Horace, *Ars Poetica* (119) that nevertheless *fabula* must be *probabiliter*. See Robert R. Edwards, *Ratio and Invention*, pp. 79–80.

29 Matthew 3. 7 and Luke 3. 7; John 1. 27 and Luke 3. 16.

rulers, and case studies from among the estates while he simultaneously frames historical discussions in literary fictions.<sup>30</sup>

While Gower's choice of saintly narrators may complicate distinctions between forensic rhetoric and fictional narrative, it does reinforce a classical division between two kinds of aesthetic discourses: those emphasizing plot versus those stressing character.<sup>31</sup> Among artistically appealing texts, Gower demonstrates with his biblical *ethoi* that he overwhelmingly privileges the latter. Gower's literary investment in characterization over plot can be seen in the estates satires of the *Mirour de l'Omme*, *Vox Clamantis*, and the Prologue to the *Confessio Amantis*, in Amans's development and the abbreviation of source narratives in the latter poem, in the rubrics concerning the lovers' identities in the *Cinkante Balades*, in the heraldic allegory of the *Cronica Tripartita*, and in the focus on the qualities of a good ruler throughout the entire oeuvre. Almost everywhere, an exception possibly being the 'Tale of Apollonius of Tyre', Gower privileges character types over complex actions. An emphasis on character arises from new Aristotelian ideas about the psychology of discourse, Augustinian teachings on audience-oriented preaching, penitential manuals personifying the mortal sins, and more. In Gower's Aristotelian and Augustinian view of rhetoric, the passions, as we shall see in Chapter One, expressed by the powerful Word, operate upon the human will to induce a motion toward reason and right belief. While readings of Gower's poetry often underscore the privileging of reason, few yet recognize the psychology underpinning the poet's rhetoric that makes the emotions necessary for motivating rational thought. According to this psychology, the narrator's character — often established through a biblical ethos — infuses a discourse with holy feelings in order to guide the hearer to proper intellection and thus to action. With this view of the rhetorical process, Gower seems to have embraced an idea of *ductus* as conceptualized by Mary Carruthers: the way

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30 Much has been written in response to Gower's statement in the MO that he was a clerk in striped sleeves (21774). Conrad Van Dijk aptly summarizes the pertinent scholarship up to the point of his book's completion. See Conrad Van Dijk, *John Gower and the Limits of the Law* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 1–15. More recently, Sebastian Sobiecki has provided new and persuasive evidence of Gower's legal training. See Sebastian Sobiecki, 'A Southwark Tale: Gower, the 1381 Poll Tax, and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, *Speculum*, 92.3 (July 2017), 630–60. However, as Anthony Mussen cautions, 'there is, as yet, no unequivocal evidence which definitively confirms his status as a lawyer'. See Anthony Musson, 'Men of Law', in *Historians on Gower*, ed. by Stephen H. Rigby with Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2019), pp. 213–39, p. 226. Whatever Gower's relationship to the law and lawyers, he clearly studded his poetry with legalese and judicial matters, even when portraying fictional worlds such as the *Confessio*'s.

31 Cicero, *De inventione*, 1.19.27 and *Ad Her* 1.8.13.

that a text leads someone to a new point of view.<sup>32</sup> In Gower's practice, the saintly speaker who is central to the text's ethos both models the progress toward right belief and action and convinces the audience to follow.

To lead an audience in this way, Gower practised a range of rhetorical strategies too wide to cover fully in this book. In addition to an Aristotelian and Augustinian psychology of invention that depends upon the voices of biblical orators, Gower deployed a variety of methods for arrangement and style found in the *artes praedicandi*, *dictaminis*, and *poetriae*, as well as in his source texts. In order to provide close readings of poems in a multilingual corpus that illustrate Gower's prominent approaches, *John Gower's Rhetoric* focuses upon two kinds of arrangements with which the poet experimented: epistolary forms adapted from Ovid and the *ars dictaminis*, and conclusions exemplified in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Marian prayers. Investigating the rhetorical office of style as well as arrangement, *John Gower's Rhetoric* will explore the poet's figures of speech involving repetitions and the plain style that these figures often adorned. *Repetitiones*, Gower found, are the most transparent speech ornaments, magnifying straightforward expressions rather than fracturing or obscuring them. From among Gower's rhetorical tactics, it is the reiterative elocution that is most often lauded and imitated by renaissance authors and teachers.

For contemporary scholars it is the image of Gower the archer, depicted in four manuscripts of the *Vox Clamantis*, that provides the most potent emblem of the medieval poet's rhetorical stance. In the best-known versions of this image, the poet — sporting a brown beard, jaunty hat, and blue coat, with a full quiver attached to his side — draws a bow and aims at a globular representation of a tripartite world. In imitation of contemporary T-O maps, the globe in the archer's sights is divided into three units according to the elements of air, earth, and water, but also suggesting Europe, Asia, and Africa or the three estates.<sup>33</sup> Crouching and

32 Mary Carruthers, 'The Concept of Ductus, or Journeying through a Work of Art', in *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 190–213.

33 London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.IV, fol. 9 and Glasgow, Hunterian Museum, MS T.2.17, fol. 6<sup>v</sup>, display the image of Gower the archer that became the most popular in print culture because it was the most often reproduced. William Caxton began this trend by using it to illustrate his edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. The image of the archer differs in San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 150, fol. 13<sup>v</sup>, showing an older Gower on a large green shooting up at the world topped by a cross and pennon, and in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud 719, fol. 21<sup>r</sup>, a doodler seems to have provided his or her own version. All these images are associated with a Latin quatrain announcing Gower's role as archer. See Joyce Coleman, 'Illuminations in Gower's Manuscripts', in *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager, Brian Gastle, and Ana Sáez-Hidalgo (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 117–31. For easily accessible viewing of various representations of Gower the archer, see Joyce Coleman, 'Global Gower: The Archer Aiming at the World', *Accessus*, 5.2 (2019): <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/accessus/vol5/iss2/2/>>

about to release his arrow at a complacent planet, the figure of the author wields a piercing moral or a damaging satire. As Gower himself writes in a short Latin poem attached to the image:

Ad mundum mitto mea iacula, dumque sagitto;  
At vbi iustus erit, nulla sagitta ferit.  
Sed male viuentes hos vulnero transgredientes;  
Conscius ergo sibi se speculetur ibi.

(While bearing the bow, I shoot my arrows at the world,  
Though where there is one just person, no arrows will land.  
But those living in transgression, I badly wound;  
May the mindful person, therefore, look inside himself.)

In the Latin verses Gower confirms that his aim is sure — that the arrow will hit a precise target to topple transgression where it now stands.

Observing the unusual nature of the poet-as-archer image, Joyce Coleman traces Gower's models for it in medieval illustrations of martial and hunting activities and in Judeo-Christian traditions.<sup>34</sup> She acknowledges Wickert's important point that the archer is not only a military image of a poet attacking the wayward, but also a biblical and homiletic image, especially suitable for the rhetoric attributed to the Saints John in the *Vox*.<sup>35</sup> Presented as a piercing weapon in several scriptures, the Word of God, which Gower acknowledges as the creative force behind human speech acts, is specifically likened to arrows in Psalms 43/44 and 118/19.<sup>36</sup> As an archer the poet hefts a righteous bow against sinful humanity, just as the saints do in Gregory the Great's *Homilia in Ezechiel*. Channelling the voices of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist was one way in which John Gower imitated these saints. According to Gregory, 'the arrows of the Lord are the words of the saints, which strike the hearts of sinners' (*Jacula Domini sunt verba Sanctorum quae corda peccantium feriunt*).<sup>37</sup> Arrows, according to Wickert, were also a popular emblem for preaching. In her demonstration of Gower's sermon discourses, she notes: 'When [John] Bromyard, the contemporary and countryman of Gower, speaks of the homilist as an archer, one can be certain that the image is common

34 Coleman, 'Global Gower', <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/accessus/vol5/iss2/2/>>

35 Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, pp. 67–70.

36 On general references to the Word of God as a piercing weapon, see Hebrews 4. 12 and Habakkuk 3. 11. For Psalmic descriptions of the arrows of God, see Psalm 43 (44. 6) and 118 (119. 4).

37 Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem Prophetam*, 1.5, ed. by M. Adriaen, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 142 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), p. 64.



ecclesiastical property'.<sup>38</sup> With his bow, Gower the preacher becomes a holy combatant in God's army.

While sermon-like depictions of the Word's arrows might strike terror in the consciences of sinners, the wounds inflicted can also be signs of divine love. As Barbara Newman's research suggests, Gower could have associated the archer with Song of Songs 4.9, in which a look from the beloved wounds the Bridegroom's heart, or with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, often cited by Gower, which brings the Greek depiction of Cupid's arrows into Latin literature.<sup>39</sup> While Ovid's representation of a sharp arrow inflaming Apollo's heart at the same time that a blunt shaft quenches Daphne's desire would have spread abroad to schoolboys studying the poem, it also infiltrated religious traditions in which Jesus both suffers and inflicts the wounds of love. Jesus, like the lover of the Song of Songs, is the Bridegroom wounded for love of his church and by Longinus's lance. He is also the divine figure for the redeeming love that penetrates the hearts of the faithful. As Eric Jager has written, this spiritual wounding occurs with a sharp instrument that could be interpreted as either a dart or a pen, since the Latin 'calamus' (reed) implies both.<sup>40</sup> Concordantly, in the figure of the archer, Gower's bow represents attacks on the estates by a pen that is ultimately meant to heal them in amity. Like Cupid in the Ovidian verses which Gower quotes at length, the medieval poet strikes the world for love's sake, with the hope that the Word might fully manifest itself on earth. As Newman remarks,

Christian iconographers borrowed not only Love's bow and arrows, but also such attributes as the firebrand, the pierced heart, and the flaming heart. The burgeoning and closely linked cults of the Holy Name and the Sacred Heart were both implicated in this development.<sup>41</sup>

Gower the archer participates in these cults in his three major poems: by dwelling on Mary's names in the *Mirour*, by attempting to pierce the hearts of sinners in the *Vox*, and by suffering Love's flaming dart in the *Confessio*. As the archer or one suffering an arrow's wounds, Gower hopes to open a

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38 Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, p. 72. An extended discussion of the meaning of the arrow for moral discourse occurs on pp. 67–73. Wickert's main point is to show how the VC is, in effect, an extended sermon. Her citation of John Bromyard alludes to his comments in the *Summa Praedicantium* on Psalm 43.

39 See Barbara Newman, 'Love's Arrows: Christ as Cupid in Late Medieval Art and Devotion', in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 263–86 (264). Ovid introduces the motif of Cupid's arrows in *Metamorphoses* I. 468–71.

40 Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 78.

41 Newman, 'Love's Arrows', p. 268.

space for the Word to continue acts of creation in the hearts and minds of humanity.

The chapters of *John Gower's Rhetoric* explore the various theories and discursive strategies behind the poet's wounding pen. Chapter One, 'Gower's "Rethorique"', finds the poet's thoughts on the Word, as well as on Aristotelian philosophy and Ciceronian practice, in a lecture in Book 7 of the *Confessio Amantis*. Although the *Confessio* was written years after the poet's two major works in French and Latin, the Middle English discourse on the field of rhetoric, occurring in an expanded treatment of the seven liberal arts, highlights three important points that are constant throughout Gower's oeuvre: perspectives on pathos, divinity in language, and a reiterative style. From the rhetoric lecture's opening in epigrammatic Latin verses that introduce Book 7's discussion of rhetoric, Gower employs Aristotelian frameworks for moving an audience toward the truth, Augustinian thought on the Word's manifestations in human speech and society, and Ciceronian methods for speaking plainly while emphasizing main points through repetition. While it must be said that Gower's work in other languages, especially in Latin, offers more ornate forms of elocution, there is a pattern across his trilingual corpus of forcefully delivering messages that can be difficult to hear and of underscoring the critical parts with *repetitions*. The Middle English *Confessio Amantis*, which many recognize as the epitome of Gower's plain style, offers discourses on the medieval arts and sciences in the kind of honest and uncomplicated expression that was sought after by renaissance scientists such as Francis Bacon.

Chapter Two shows how Gower achieved his rhetorical ends by speaking in the *personae* of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. 'My Name is John: Biblical Ethos and Apocalyptic Narrative' records Gower's investment in his saintly namesakes' preaching and prophecy and his efforts to craft poetic speakers modelled on their expressions. This is the case especially in the extended *Vox Clamantis* (including the *Visio Anglie* and *Cronica Tripartita*), as well as in the excoriation of the estates in the *Mirour de l'Omme* and the Prologue of the *Confessio Amantis*. These narrators are called 'John' to indicate the multi-layered construction of biblical voices with the poet *in propria persona*, a writer who embraces the Saints John as role models. Inhabiting the texts and expressions of the Saints John, even while repeatedly citing Ovid, Gower melded social and political criticism with divination, his ethos based in biblical figures and his warnings connected to apocalyptic visions. A poet of *Metamorphoses*, Ovid's words support the spiritual transformations that Gower sought by delivering the hortatory preaching of the Baptist and the terrifying visions of the Evangelist. The spiritual authority of the Saints John gives the poet licence to invoke the Word and play upon the emotions of both king and subject in the interest of England's moral improvement. While Gower held an enduring attachment to Johannine identities and texts, he gradually lost

confidence in the capacity of this *persona* to preach in a way that might change sinful England. Since writing the *Mirour*, he had been developing a theory of Marian rhetoric, and it will finally be in Marian speakers and devotees that the poet invests his best hopes for accomplishing the aims of 'Rethorique'.

Chapter Three, '*Virgo bona dicendi perita*: The Good Maiden Speaking Well', charts Gower's construction of Marian rhetoric, the culmination of it in the oratory of the *Confessio*'s Peronelle and Thaise, and the imitation of it by Shakespeare and Wilkins in *Pericles*. In the *Mirour de l'Omme*, by describing the speech patterns of the Virtues especially associated with the Virgin Mary, Gower shows how the Mother bears the Word through human discourse. The *Mirour*, consonant with instructions in the *artes poetriae* concerning the divine invention and arrangement of words, explains how Marian virtues shape an orator's ethos and how the holy speech emerging from these virtues effects clear and honest communication. Among the Marian *artes poetriae*, John of Garland's *Parisiana Poetria*, for instance, exemplifies all kinds of rhythmic verse and more with Marian lines, establishing veneration of the Virgin as a base point for composing beautiful and compelling language. Having created templates for Marian speech in the *Mirour*, Gower illustrates the effectiveness of Marian rhetoric in Peronelle's sermonettes on humility in the *Confessio*'s Book 1 and Thaise's defence of chastity in Book 8: these are good maidens speaking well. Impressed by the confidence and virtue of the *Confessio*'s final female speaker, Shakespeare and Wilkins built Marina's speeches in *Pericles* on Gower's principles of Marian rhetoric. Marina is a bold and compelling orator who persuades her hearers to virtue in guileless, reiterative appeals.

Chapter Four turns from Gower's definitions of rhetoric and biblical ethos to arrangement. 'Epistles and Rhetorical Experimentation, Part I: Contexts and Practices' is the first of two chapters to investigate Gower's epistolary structures gleaned from the *ars dictaminis* and *poetriae*, the mirrors for princes, and Ovid's poetry. Chapter Four lays out three main scenarios for which Gower wrote missives: for channelling female voices, giving advice to regents, and appealing to benefactors. All such situations involve a subordinated speaker who directs difficult words at an audience distanced not only by place, but also by gender or class. Close readings of the 'Tale of Canace and Machaire', the *Epistola ad regem*, and the Dedicatory Epistle appended to the All Souls manuscript of the *Vox Clamantis* illustrate how Gower forged epistolary arrangements for a condemned and abandoned woman to testify to her last wishes, a subject from among the gentry to counsel a monarch, and an ailing author to invoke bonds with an archbishop.<sup>42</sup> These letters, providing effective structures for

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<sup>42</sup> The 'Tale of Canace and Machaire' can be found in CA 3, ll. 143–336, the *Epistola ad regem* in VC 6, 8–18, and the DE at the beginning of Oxford, All Souls College, MS 98, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

both masculine and feminine voices, send plainly spoken but emotionally charged words to move their superiors toward respectful treatment of the dead, governance that can stabilize England, and meditation on schism in the church.

Once Chapter Four (Part I) lays the groundwork for Gower's composition of missives, Chapter Five (Part II) takes the investigation of epistles and arrangement to an entire manuscript — the Trentham Manuscript, a collection of Gower's late work in all three languages meant to honour its dedicatee, the newly crowned Henry IV.<sup>43</sup> This collection offers a fascinating display of Gower's generic experimentation, wherein the poet explores, among other things, the relationship between letters and songs, between textuality and music. This chapter — 'Music and Letters in the Trentham Manuscript' — treats a short Latin poem, 'Rex Celi Deus' and a ballade cycle, the *Cinkante Balades* in order to reveal the methods behind this experimentation and to analyse the results. While Gower unexpectedly infuses 'Rex Celi Deus' — an epistolary petition to a king — with allusions to hymn-singing, he withholds any mention of song where it would be expected in the missive-like ballades. These rhetorical surprises and the constant code switching among the manuscript's three languages offer a high compliment to the new king while they enable the transmission of the Word and straightforward moral advice.

Continuing to explore habits of arrangement and harking back to Chapter Three's discussion of Marian rhetoric, Chapter Six — 'The *hortus conclusus* in Gower's Poems' — looks at references to the Virgin in the conclusions to the *Mirour de l'Omme*, *Cinkante Balades*, *Visio Anglie*, and *Confessio Amantis*. Each of these texts offers a closing appeal to the Virgin that relies on advice in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and various *artes poetriae*. While the final segments of the *Visio* and *Confessio* make small but significant gestures toward the Virgin, the *Mirour* and the ballade cycle finish with entire poems dedicated to Mary. Whether understated or amplified, these Marian conclusions bring the text full circle, returning the narrator and audience to rationality and peace: to Marian virtue in the *Mirour*, sensible affection in the *Cinkante Balades*, the courage to face post-Uprising England in the *Visio*, and the comfort of prayer in the *Confessio*. The circular structure, re-establishing sensible thought and devout spirit, imitates a *hortus conclusus*: a space in which the Virgin's integrity weeds out sinful impulses and maintains purity. Since the Virgin clears the narrator's ground of unwanted sin, it is not surprising that Gower's Marian conclusions often rely strongly on landscape imagery, on scenes that can be contained through the Virgin's influence, such as the raging sea in the *Visio* or the woodland green of the *Confessio*. Marian petitions encapsulate

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43 The Trentham Manuscript is housed today as London, British Library, MS Additional 59495.

Gower's rhetorical goals of invoking the Word, revealing the truth in the speaker's heart, and conveying it to the audience.

Chapter Seven provides a coda to *John Gower's Rhetoric*, since it focuses entirely on post-fourteenth-century responses to the poet's work. In 'Renaissance Receptions of Gowerian *Repetitio*' we see that readers, teachers, and playwrights valued Gower's Latin and Middle English works for their authority and native diction, respectively. Among elocutionary methods, Gower's figures of speech based on repetition were particularly admired. In the manuscript of the *Confessio Amantis*, now Chicago, Newberry Library MS 33.5, we see evidence of teaching Gower's reiterative 'Rethorique', in Ben Jonson's *English Grammar* citations of Gower's *repetitiones* as examples of effective language, and in Shakespeare and Wilkins's *Pericles* many figures of repetition in the lines written for Gower the Chorus. The fourteenth-century poet was identified with both impressive phrases duplicated for effect and the authority gleaned through reiterating lines from canonical authors. What Gower had done with Ovid, Jonson and Shakespeare-Wilkins do for the medieval poet. In this way, Gower's 'Rethorique' participates in a golden chain of recurring plots and verses.

*John Gower's Rhetoric* articulates the poet's theory of discourse, discovers its applications throughout the trilingual oeuvre, provides close readings based on elocutionary practices, and traces the influence of the poet's signature style into the Renaissance. While it would be impossible to pursue every angle of Gower's rhetoric in a single volume, this book shows for the first time how new Aristotelian thought, Augustinian theology, and Ciceronian eloquence combined in a discursive theory that manifested itself across the wide variety of Gower's poems. *John Gower's Rhetoric* explores the influence of dictaminal training in verse letters, of Johannine preaching in apocalyptic narratives, and of the *artes poetriae* in effecting figures of speech. It raises up Gower's Marian rhetoric, long neglected and misunderstood by scholars, as a branch of oratory complementing the poet's deployment of saintly speakers. Gower believed that Mary's faith, obedience, and nurturing of God instilled in her a great ability to reason and produce holy speech; in turn — invoking the Virgin intercessor and muse — the poet laboured to write poems that would move humankind to rational accord with the maker at last.



## Gower's 'Rethorique'

In the *Confessio Amantis*, at the height of his poetic career, Gower defines the 'Rethorique' governing his trilingual oeuvre. While Gower may view Herodotus as the founder of poetry, in the medieval poet's own estimation, the theorists of rhetoric provide the philosophical and practical foundations for every sort of discourse, prose or versified.<sup>1</sup> Influenced by Aristotle and Cicero — and by Brunetto Latini's summation of their precepts in the *Trésor* — Gower perceives rhetoric to be the art most important for forming poetry that mirrors a well-governed society and a rational soul.<sup>2</sup> Moved by St Augustine and the medieval *artes poetriae, dictaminis, and praedicandi*, Gower acknowledges that rhetoric can tap the creative power of the Word for well-structured verses that stir their audience through direct address and hortatory narrators. In sum, Gower articulates and practises a theory of rhetoric that cements social bonds by preaching the moral relations that bind them, encourages the pursuit of reason and piety, praises emotions that propel an audience toward reasonable conclusions, and produces imaginative worlds in accord with God's will.

This chapter concentrates on Gower's explicit statements about rhetoric in the *Confessio Amantis*, Book 7: the first discussion of the discipline in the English language.<sup>3</sup> It shows how Book 7's rhetoric lecture and other commentary on speech in the *Confessio* advance Aristotelian theory, Augustinian theology, and Ciceronian eloquence as cornerstones for powerful and persuasive language. Throughout *John Gower's Rhetoric* we will find these cornerstones at the base of many of the author's poems in Latin, French, and Middle English, although they are laid in the specific context of Genius's teaching Amans about the seven liberal arts. For Gower, rhetoric is the field encompassing all kinds of composition and capable of providing rubrics for all facets of his own. An examination

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1 CA 4, ll. 2413–15. On Gower's attributing the discovery of poetry to Herodotus, see R. F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), pp. 164–66.

2 On Gower's debts to Cicero and Latini, see, for instance, Götz Schmitz, 'Rhetoric and Fiction: Gower's Comments on Eloquence and Courtly Poetry', in *Gower's Confessio Amantis: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Peter Nicholson (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), p. 122, and Kim Zarins, 'Gower and Rhetoric', in *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*, ed. by Ana Sáez-Hidalgo (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 38–39.

3 CA 7, ll. 1507–1640. See James J. Murphy, 'John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and the First Discussion of Rhetoric in the English Language', *Philological Quarterly*, 41 (1962), 401–11.

of the 'Rethorique' lecture and related commentary on the field in the *Confessio* will explain how Aristotle's categories of the arts and psychology of persuasion influence Gower's definition of rhetoric, how the W/word sustains poetic expression, and how the plain style, garnished with figures of repetition, is the hallmark of eloquence.

Genius's 'Rethorique' lecture is introduced by a Latin poem epitomizing the main principles of Gower's rhetoric. The verses proclaim the Aristotelian dictum that the simply stated truth is more persuasive than matter offered in a carefully wrought language, and they therefore imply a preference for the plain style. In addition, they declare the divine force inherent in the W/word:

Compositi pulcra sermonis verba placere  
Principio poterunt, veraque fine placent.  
Herba, lapis, sermo, tria sunt virtute repleta,  
Vis tamen ex verbi pondere plura facit.

(Beautiful words of a composed speech will please  
In the beginning, and true words please in the end.  
Herb, gem, speech: these three are full of power,  
Though the force from the weight of the W/word is greater.)

The ensuing Middle English lecture springs from the concluding Latin line on the power of the W/word by acknowledging God's magnificent creativity in investing humankind with speech: 'Above alle erthli creatures / The hihe makere of natures / The word to man hath gove alone [...]':<sup>4</sup>

From there, the lecture emphasizes humanity's responsibility to use this divine verbal gift virtuously:

So scholde he be the more honeste,  
To whom God gaf so gret a gifte,  
And loke wel that he ne schifte  
Hise wordes to no wicked us [...].<sup>5</sup>

The passage proceeds to offer rhetoric as the discipline that can aid in the wise use of heaven-sent language, a supportive academic skill under circumstances when 'wordes' are often put to 'wicked us', as in the subsequent example of Ulysses' deceit of the Trojan people.<sup>6</sup> To practise rhetoric well, it is necessary to understand its disciplinary scope, so a discussion of rhetoric's place among the language arts ensues. 'Rethorique'

<sup>4</sup> CA 7, ll. 1507–9.

<sup>5</sup> CA 7, ll. 1516–19.

<sup>6</sup> For a more positive reading of Ulysses as rhetorician in the CA, see Katherine S. Gittes, 'Ulysses in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: The Christian Soul as Silent Rhetorician', *English Language Notes*, 24 (1986), 7–14.



is declared the crown of the *trivium*, controlling both grammar and logic through its conveyance of the divinely invested W/word, whose power is extensively praised. A concluding section, refashioning material from Brunetto Latini's *Trésor*, raises up the Catilinarian orations as a reminder that although the goal of rhetoric should be truthful discourse, rhetorical strategies can be used not only by patently deceitful speakers such as Ulysses, but also by speakers who view the truth differently. In this concession Gower acknowledges Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as speech on contingent matters — and concerning contingencies there are always multiple points of view.<sup>7</sup> The conclusion to the 'Rethorique' lecture makes clear that the Catilinarian orations from the Roman Republic should be examined for uses and abuses of the 'word', which the poet has already endowed with a theological inflection.<sup>8</sup>

### 'Rethorique' among the Disciplines

Identifying rhetoric as the overarching discipline of the *trivium*, the 'Rethorique' lecture both contains and is contained by a discussion on the relationships among the liberal arts. Before approaching the important subheadings in Genius's lecture on rhetoric — Gower's Aristotelianism, concepts of the Word, and opinions on Ciceronian style — it is necessary to put Genius's discussion of 'Rethorique' in the context of academic disciplines as discussed throughout the *Confessio Amantis* and defined in Book 7.

Up until Book 7, the *Confessio Amantis* includes a Prologue excoriating abuses by the different estates of fourteenth-century society and six books narrating the lover's confession by Genius, the priest of Venus. Each of these six books focuses on one mortal sin against love and offers *exempla* illustrating infractions against love's law. Although focused on the self-destruction of sloth in love, Book 4 looks forward to the fuller discussion

7 Aristotle claims that the rhetorical syllogism, or enthymeme, constructs a proof for contingent matters. See Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, ed. and trans. by George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 2.22. On Gower's embrace of an Aristotelian concept of contingency, see especially J. Allan Mitchell, 'Gower's "Confessio Amantis", Natural Morality, and Vernacular Ethics', in *John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts*, ed. by Malte Urban (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 135–53; J. Allan Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplary Narrative in Chaucer and Gower*, Chaucer Studies Series, 33 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 69–86.

8 Discussing the Catilinarian orations, Gower adapts Brunetto Latini, *Trésor*, III, xxxiv–xxxvii. See Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres du Trésor*, ed. by Francis J. Carmody, University of California Publications in Modern Philology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948). See also Paul Barette and Spurgeon Baldwin, trans. *The Book of the Treasure (Li Livres dou Trésor)* (New York: Garland, 1993).

of the liberal arts by praising inventors and the founders of the *trivium*.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, Book 6 provides the motivation for the academic lectures: there, the ‘Tale of Nectanabus’ concerning Alexander’s unidentified father and erstwhile tutor kindles the lover’s interest in hearing the instructions eventually given by Aristotle to Alexander. In response to Amans’s appeal for advanced learning, Book 7, though it develops trends in Books 4 and 6, abandons the confession of the seven deadly sins against love to offer a regal compendium of Aristotelian knowledge. This training includes information about the seven liberal arts, as well as the development and execution of public policy; it comprises a mirror for princes reflecting the preparation necessary to rule well. Despite the Aristotelian lecture’s apparent distraction from Amans’s recurring complaints against love and regardless of Genius’s avowed ignorance of the liberal arts, the priest of Venus’s discourse on Aristotelian lore is pithy, concise, and well-informed on an array of pertinent traditions. Moreover, as Russell Peck and many others who have built upon his scholarship argue, Book 7’s *speculum principum* is crucial to the *Confessio Amantis*’s project of teaching self-governance to Amans.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, a seeming digression from the confessional to the classroom enables the lover’s self-formation and control while it situates Book 7 in current Aristotelian discourses. During the fourteenth century, the popular *Secretum Secretorum* and the less well-known *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* were believed to be records of Aristotle’s instructions to Alexander in good governance and effective speech, respectively.<sup>11</sup> According to Ann Astell, Gower desires in the *Confessio*’s Book 7 and elsewhere to speak as Aristotle to a new Alexander, Richard II, who, commissions this book in the

9 CA 4, ll. 2396–2456, 2633–2700.

10 Russell A. Peck, *Kingship and Common Profit in Gower’s Confessio Amantis* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978). After the publication of Peck’s important book, many other scholars advanced the thesis that Book 7’s *speculum principum* reflects the pervasive political themes in the *Confessio Amantis*. See, for instance, Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); Diane Watt, *Amoral Gower: Language, Sex and Politics*, *Medieval Cultures*, 38 (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Elliott Kendall, *Lordship and Literature: John Gower and the Politics of the Great Household* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008).

11 R. Steele, ed., *Secretum Secretorum, Opera hactenus inedita Roger Baconi V* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), pp. 25–172; E. S. Forster, trans., *De Rhetorica ad Alexandrum in The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 11, ed. and trans. by W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), pp. 230–311. Scholars now agree that the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* ought to be attributed to Anaximenes of Lampsacus, who was also one of Alexander’s tutors. See P. Chiron, ‘The Rhetoric to Alexander’ in *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric*, ed. by Ian Worthington (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 101–03.

Ricardian Prologue.<sup>12</sup> Gower has already spoken as Aristotle to Richard sometime before 1381 in a Latin mirror for princes, the *Epistola ad regem*, whose epistolary form will be a focus of Chapter Four. In the *Confessio*, as Genius conveys Aristotelian teachings in Book 7 to Amans, Richard, and the future dedicatee, Henry of Derby, Gower represents the Philosopher in both his wisdom and his folly. In the finale of the *Confessio Amantis*, Amans, or the senescent lover 'John Gower', witnesses a company of other aged intellects at love's court, a company including Aristotle 'bridled' by the Queen of Greece, just as Amans / Gower is yoked to an unnamed lady.<sup>13</sup> In the end of the *Confessio Amantis*, Aristotle and the medieval poet are alike in their imprudent desire, as well as in their understanding as articulated by Genius. As Gower is wont throughout his entire œuvre, the poet directs attention both to his erudition and his common foolishness, whether the latter be manifested in ensnaring lust, as in the *Confessio*, in the hard-heartedness that delays repentance until the end of the *Mirour de l'Omme*, or in the animalistic nature shared with the rebels while escaping to the wilderness in the *Visio Anglie*. The narrator's exposure of his own faults has many complex effects, perhaps most importantly here, the ability of a fallible and more modest 'Aristotle' to provide palatable instructions to an imperfect 'Alexander' in the liberal arts and other matters.

A significant part of this instruction, the *Confessio Amantis*'s 'Rethorique' section, is positioned between a discussion of theology and science on the one hand and of political policy and ethical practice on the other: in Gower's words, between 'Theorique' and 'Practique'. On one side of rhetoric is 'Theorique', the epistemological category that opens Book 7 and consists in theology, physics, mathematics, and astronomy, the subjects that are, in Genius's estimation, 'grounded / On him which al the world hath founded [...]' and need to be articulated through the God-given W/word.<sup>14</sup> Of the theoretical sciences, Genius begins with 'Theologie', since the Philosopher, according to Genius, 'clepeth God the ferste cause' of all other knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Genius then offers a short commentary on physics, concerning the 'bodely substance' of the physical natures that God 'caused'.<sup>16</sup> The lecture proceeds to the quadrivium — arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy — before reaching the topic of 'Rethorique', which includes the *trivium*. Following the 'Rethorique' section are lessons and *exempla* concerning economics, policy, and ethics, or 'Practique', those subjects that distinguish virtue from vice and allow the philosopher to

12 Ann Astell, *Political Allegory in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 89.

13 CA 8, ll. 2705–13.

14 CA 7, ll. 31–2.

15 CA 7, l. 86.

16 CA 7, l. 141.

rule self, family, and others responsibly.<sup>17</sup> In several cases, the narratives in the 'Practique' section promote ethical speech or offer warnings about abusive rhetoric, as in the 'Tale of Diogenes and Aristippus' in which the former demonstrates honest speech according to philosophical values while the latter spouts debased flatteries. Genius's lecture on 'Rethorique' harks back to 'Theologie' in discussions of the Word and looks forward to the conclusion on practical ethics through its emphasis on truthful and straightforward oratory and its short discussion of the Catilinarian debates. Rhetoric links to physics by comparing the Word to potent herbs and stones and to policy by guiding the deliberations that inform virtuous, responsible rule.<sup>18</sup> The 'Rethorique' section, then, provides a middle term in Book 7's body of knowledge by reflecting on the place of the W/word in creation and on the activities of humankind.

The complex tripartite organization of Book 7 places each of the seven arts in one of these epistemic categories — theory, rhetoric, or practice — with Latin glosses to guide the reader in the order of and hierarchies inherent in the disciplines. Derived from Aristotle's classification of the theoretical, practical, and productive sciences, these categories of learning were loosely available to Gower in the *Trésor*. Like the *Trésor*, Book 7 of the *Confessio Amantis* comprises a mirror for princes in imitation of texts such as the Aristotelian *Secretum Secretorum* and Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*;<sup>19</sup> however, while the *Trésor* divides philosophy into Theory, Practice, and Logic, with rhetoric comprising the final discipline of the practical arts and dialectic being the chief subject under logic, Gower creates an elevated place for rhetoric in Book 7's academic triad.<sup>20</sup> Rita Copeland calls Gower's reconfiguration of the disciplines a 'most radical revision of the place of rhetoric in the system of the sciences', even in an age of shifting concepts of the discipline, and Götz Schmitz emphasizes the moral imperative given to rhetoric in Gower's schema.<sup>21</sup> 'Rethorique' takes

17 CA 7, ll. 30–46.

18 Both J. Allan Mitchell and Matthew W. Irvin observe that in Gower rhetoric aligns with prudence to determine how an artfully made discourse might catalyse prudent action. See J. Allan Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplary Narrative*, pp. 25–28; Matthew W. Irvin *The Poetic Voices of John Gower: Politics and Personae in the Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp. 2–4.

19 Charles Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De Regimine Principum: Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University, c. 1275 - c. 1525*, Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicology, 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

20 Götz Schmitz points out that in Gower's rearrangement of the disciplines of the *trivium*, rhetoric occupies 'a higher, philosophical plane'. See Schmitz, 'Rhetoric and Fiction', p. 126.

21 Rita Copeland, 'Lydgate, Hawes, and the Science of Rhetoric in the Late Middle Ages', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 53.1 (March 1992), p. 67. See also Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, eds., *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300–1475* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 'Gower may not be imagining an Italian-style vernacular civic discourse in England; but his explosive revision of the scientific model

its place between 'Theorique' and 'Practique', a disciplinary fulcrum that allows for the conveyance of theology and science and the working out of practical knowledge in truthful and artful speech. Uplifting 'Rethorique' to an epistemological category announces the importance of the field in understanding the *Confessio Amantis* and, as this book will argue, a wide range of Gower's poetry.

Relationships among the liberal arts are foregrounded in the entirety of Book 7, as well as inside the 'Rethorique' lecture itself. In the *Confessio's* Book 7 'Rethorique' not only rises to a disciplinary status equal with 'Theorique' and 'Practique', but it also subsumes the other arts of the *trivium* (grammar and logic). As Genius claims, rhetoric 'hath Gramaire, it hath Logique';<sup>22</sup> Just as Gower raises 'Rethorique' to an epistemic category, equal to 'Theorique' and 'Practique', he uplifts the discipline by making it paradigmatic for *trivium* studies. According to Genius, rhetoric is 'the science / Appropred to the reverence / Of wordes that ben resonable';<sup>23</sup> in other words, rhetoric teaches language tools for the discernment and frank employment of rational thought, and as part of that curriculum, grammar dictates congruity in syntax while logic insists on congruity of thought. Therefore, grammar makes the oral or written construction of a speech possible while logic makes the ideal end of rhetoric possible. Gower's expansive view of rhetoric as the executor of grammar and logic might have arisen because, as Copeland comments, 'Rhetoric [...] looks at large structures, that is, at genres and at the systems and effects of discourse' [...] and 'position[s] a text within an overarching epistemology or scientific outlook'.<sup>24</sup> Rhetoric's capacity for categorizing discourse and identifying the linguistic practices appropriate for various forms of content not only renders it the managing discipline for grammar and logic, but also links it to scientific discovery and classification, a link that will become important later in this chapter when we explore how early modern scientists promulgated Gowerian rhetorical theory.<sup>25</sup>

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reflects a new political reality in which vernacular culture must rely upon rhetoric to mediate between ethics and public affairs' (11). Schmitz, 'Rhetoric and Fiction', p. 128. In addition, Irvin points out that starting from Latini's narrow views in the *Trésor* on rhetoric as public persuasion, Gower expands the field to make it more 'personal', embracing verses on Amans's desire and acknowledging the power in each individual's use of the word. See Irvin, *The Poetic Voice of John Gower*, p. 14.

<sup>22</sup> CA 7, l. 1528.

<sup>23</sup> CA 7, ll. 1523–25.

<sup>24</sup> Rita Copeland, 'The Ciceronian Rhetorical Tradition', in *The Rhetoric of Cicero in its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 254.

<sup>25</sup> Rita Copeland explains how the twelfth-century school at Chartres blended '[s]cientific classification and poetic composition', making rhetoric itself a topic in discussions of human knowledge. See Copeland, 'The Ciceronian Rhetorical Tradition', pp. 257–58.

Even though a concept of rhetoric as paradigmatic for discourse and science emerged from the twelfth-century Chartrian school in texts by Bernardus Silvestris and Alan of Lille that were well known to Gower, a treatment of grammar and logic as independent fields — the former a prerequisite for rhetoric, the latter a more advanced study — would have been more typical. By and large, medieval grammarians built curricula around the pedagogical assumption that had undergirded *trivium* instruction since Quintilian: that grammar, rhetoric, and logic constituted separate and consecutive *artes*. This does not mean that some teachings did not overlap; for instance, young students might learn to declaim in both grammar and rhetoric courses, performing Ovidian poetry or their own compositions, respectively, or they might investigate the most persuasive proofs in both rhetoric and logic classes. Nevertheless, each art was believed to expand over its own territory, no matter how differently delineated by various thinkers.

Martin Irvine lays out grammar's autonomous and impressive textual domain; he demonstrates that the *artes grammatica*, with their focus on Latin language teaching and interpreting the literary masters, established the classical and Christian textual community that is the hallmark of the Middle Ages.<sup>26</sup> Grammar's realm was vast, since it covered both basic language learning and sophisticated linguistics, an introduction to literary classics and commentary upon them. Grammar not only opened the gate to literate culture, but also served God's purposes. Influenced by St Jerome's Latin Vulgate Bible, medieval masters extolled grammar for teaching Latin, one of the holy languages in which scripture was written. By making grammar subordinate to rhetoric, Gower nods to the introductory nature of the former, but transfers its supervision of linguistics and the literary canon to rhetoric's management. Having done so, Gower invites readers to study 'Rethorique' in order to comprehend his poetry. Since, as we shall see, Gower writes in and praises a plain and reiterative style in the *Confessio Amantis*, he also has less need to privilege the field that concentrates on the tropes and figures for an understanding of literature. Grammar studies delve into tropes and figures by way of distinguishing effective expression from barbarism and explaining the literary flourishes of canonical authors. For authors such as Gower who sought to teach in straightforward language and for contemporary philosophers who did not want to vitiate the expression of truth with stylistic embellishment, certain tropes and figures taught in grammar had less value. As Irvine explains, "*Grammatica*" was left with the internal contradiction of having to treat seriously forms of expression which had been systematically excluded

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26 Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350–1100*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

from the philosophical discourse from which it developed'.<sup>27</sup> By bringing 'Gramaire' under the sway of 'Rethorique', Gower avoids this contradiction, and he openly disavows rhetorical practices that would complicate rather than clarify through tropes and figures.

At the same time that Gower diverges from common academic perspectives on grammar, he demotes logic in an unusual way; it would have been more typical to make rhetoric subservient to logic. After all, logic studies and debate provided the ultimate means of obtaining advanced degrees at the universities and *studia*. Gower understood the emphasis that logic bears in academic practice and writings like scholastic treatises based in dialectic. The scholastics relied on authorities such as Boethius, who, in explaining the relationships among the language arts in Book 4 of the *Topics*, made rhetoric inferior to logic because the latter is aimed at a more educated audience and deals with truth, rather than mere opinion.<sup>28</sup> As I will argue below, Gower's reassessment of rhetoric's connection to logic is likely modelled on Giles of Rome's response to Boethius. However, regardless of the extent to which Gower was familiar with scholastic writings, his ingenuity is in articulating what medieval poets and preachers must have believed in contrast to the logicians: that rhetoric is the superior discipline precisely because it reaches a variety of audiences and addresses a host of relevant situations. Logic, in the *Confessio*'s 'Rethorique' lecture, offers analytical methods for defending consistent ideas that would be broadcast through rhetorical methods; logic's purpose is the 'plein wordes forto schode, / So that nothing schal go beside' as it jettisons matter that would not pertain to an argument and differentiates plainly spoken from duplicitous words to support a speaker's veracity or an audience's discrimination. Rhetoric then forms what logic has approved into a grammatically correct as well as ethically and aesthetically pleasing discourse. Although Jonathan M. Newman has argued that Gower demotes logic's status to make it 'a specialized variety of rhetoric', the 'Rethorique' lecture insists that logic and grammar are co-equal subfields enabling the offices of invention, arrangement, and style.<sup>29</sup>

For Gower, rhetoric is the architectonic principle of thought and discourse production — embracing logic and grammar — because it can persuade a variety of audiences of the truth, whether that 'truth' is the best conclusion in particular circumstances or a tenet of religious doctrine. This viewpoint was elaborated long ago by Richard McKeon, who declares rhetoric the great science of medieval discourse and cites a

27 Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*, p. 105.

28 Boethius, *Topica, Patrologiae Latinae*, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Garnier, 1844–64), 64, cols 1173–1216.

29 Jonathan M. Newman, 'The Rhetoric of Logic in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', *Mediaevalia et Humanistica*, n.s. 38 (2012), 37–57 (45).

number of divergent medieval texts that rely upon and perpetuate rhetorical teachings.<sup>30</sup> Gower is important for giving Middle English expression to what McKeon later inferred. Genius, articulating Gower's insights on widespread discursive practices, straightforwardly concludes that rhetoric provides the rubrics for all oral and written compositions. According to the *Confessio's* Book 7, these rubrics include models of Aristotelian invention that yield truth in discourse, a theological concept of the Word that endows language with a divine creative capacity, and a plain style that derives from both Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and one strand of Ciceronian practice.

### Aristotelian Rethorique<sup>31</sup>

Since the main thrust of Book 7 is an education in personal and political rulership, the immediate purpose of the 'Rethorique' section is to teach Amans about governance of speech, just as Aristotle was believed to have focused his advice to Alexander on speech in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, a Greek text that does not begin to appear in Western manuscripts until the fourteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Genius makes it clear in the beginning of the 'Rethorique' lecture that Aristotle, or 'the Philosopher', is the main authority upon whom this discourse rests: 'The Philosophre amonges alle / Forthi commendeth this science, / Which hath the reule of eloquence.'<sup>33</sup> In his rhetorical theory and practice, Gower follows the 'Philosophre' and medieval commentators on him in arguing that the truth is most persuasive, demonstrating how the passions move the hearer to belief, and privileging the plain style. In addition to Aristotle's preference for the plain style, we will see later in this chapter the Ciceronian theory that informs Gower's practice of the *genera dicendi*.

As we consider the constellation of Aristotelian concepts and sources impinging upon the *Confessio's* Book 7, we must admit some uncertainty about how Gower derived this information, partly because we lack direct

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30 Richard McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 17 (1942), 1–32. As far as I know, the *Confessio Amantis* is the only medieval text that explicitly articulates what McKeon long ago inferred from a variety of literary examples.

31 On Gower's Aristotelianism, the work of J. Allan Mitchell is particularly incisive and informative. See, for instance, his book *Ethics and Exemplary Narrative in Chaucer and Gower* that demonstrates how the *Confessio's* exempla engage the reader in rhetorical or probable reasoning. On the Aristotelian ethics informing Gower's rhetoric, see his essay 'Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Natural Morality, and Vernacular Ethics' in *John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts*, ed. by Malte Urban, Disputatio 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 135–54.

32 E. S. Forster, trans., *De Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, pp. 230–311.

33 CA 7, ll. 1542–44.



evidence of the medieval poet's schooling and partly because the academic history of Aristotelian rhetorical education in the West remains cloudy. In her article 'Pathos and Pastoralism: Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in Medieval England', Copeland has done so much to clarify both the transmission of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the medieval English uses of it.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, for Gower studies, many significant questions remain. How might Gower have gained access to one of the Latin translations of the *Rhetoric*, available since the thirteenth century? In what way might his legal training have introduced him to commentaries on the *Rhetoric*? What combination of popular Pseudo-Aristotelian lore, summary tables of Aristotelian texts, and serious scholarship might have informed Gower's view of Aristotelian rhetorical studies? Why did Gower find emerging Aristotelian thought central to poetic rhetoric? Although without further biographical evidence we cannot answer the first two questions with any certainty, this chapter will provide insights on the latter. I will proceed here on the same assumption that underpins my essay 'Rhetorical Gower: Aristotelianism in the *Confessio Amantis*'s Treatment of "Rethorique": that readily available sources corresponding strongly to statements in the 'Rethorique' lecture were within Gower's purview, either through direct access to primary texts or scholarly summations of them.<sup>35</sup> I believe it likely that Gower read not only the teachings on the *Rhetoric* in Giles of Rome's popular *De regimine principum*, a mirror for princes so well-liked that John Trevisa translated it into Middle English around 1400, and the ubiquitous tables summarizing Aristotelian thought, but also Giles's commentary on the *Rhetoric* that was based on William of Moerbeke's superior Latin translation.<sup>36</sup> It would be Giles's commentary on the *Rhetoric* that taught Gower how the passions, embedded in persuasive language, move the human will toward belief. In addition, Giles's commentary, comparing rhetoric and logic on equal terms, would have encouraged Gower to ignore logic's scholastic privilege and raise rhetoric to be the architectonic discipline of the *trivium*. As we

34 Rita Copeland, 'Pathos and Pastoralism: Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in Medieval England', *Speculum*, 89.1 (2014), 96–127.

35 Georgiana Donavin, 'Rhetorical Gower: Aristotelianism in the *Confessio Amantis*'s Treatment of "Rethorique"', in *John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts*, ed. by Malte Urban (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 155–73.

36 William of Moerbeke, *Rhetorica*, ed. by Leonhard Spengel, *Aristoteles I* (Leipzig: Tübnear, 1894), pp. 178–342. Its presence in fourteenth-century England is indicated in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 55, first noted by P. Osmond Lewry in 'Four Graduation Speeches from Oxford Manuscripts (c. 1270–1310)', *Mediaeval Studies*, 44 (1982), 138–80. Digby 55 includes a graduation speech quoting from William's *Rhetorica*. On fol. 203<sup>r</sup> the speech cited here opens: *Sicud dicit Philosophus primo Rhetorice laus est sermo elucidans magnitudinem virtutis* (*Rhetorica* 1.9). Giles of Rome (Aegidius Romanus), *Rhetorica Aristotelis cum fundatissimi arcium et theologie doctoris Egidii de Roma luculentissimis commentarii* (Venice, 1515). Giles of Rome, *De regimine principum*, ed. by Victor Courdaveaux (Oxford: Blackwell, 2018).

investigate the Aristotelian resonances in Genius's lecture on 'Rethorique', we will see how theories of rhetoric in these texts inform Gower's writing.

Amans's first Aristotelian lesson in the governance of speech takes place in verses which we have already briefly entertained, the first two lines of the Latin poetic introduction to 'Rethorique': 'Compositi pulcra sermonis verba placere / Principio poterunt, veraque fine placent' (Beautiful words of a composed speech will please in the beginning, and true words please in the end). These lines echo Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, I. i. 12–14, which states that 'that which is true and better is naturally always easier to prove and more likely to persuade' than false but beautifully adorned ideas.<sup>37</sup> In the context of Gower's verses, as Edwin D. Craun explains, truth is the ability to accord the perception with the thing perceived, a definition that can be found in Aristotle's *De interpretatione*.<sup>38</sup> In Gower's Latin head verse, true words not only accord to perception and fact and therefore persuade, but they also 'please' in doing so, without need of the help of highly wrought expressions.<sup>39</sup> In Gower the Aristotelian dictum expressed in the Latin verses preceding the 'Rethorique' lecture acquires a Christian inflection and applies to a wide variety of verse. Gower believed, as did St Augustine, that 'the truth of valid inference was not instituted by men [...] [but] by God in the reasonable order of things'; therefore, rhetoric ought to reflect divine order.<sup>40</sup> As Richard Firth Green has argued, a concept of 'trowthe' is central to much fourteenth-century writing, but Gower's concern with truth in language pervades almost all of his poetry.<sup>41</sup> Gower wished to return to a time when '[t]he word was lich to the conceite / Without semblant of deceite', and he hoped that rhetoric would enable this turn.<sup>42</sup> Over and over, Gower indicates his disgust with elegant but untruthful expressions that cannot inspire credence, for instance, the expressions of the friars mentioned in the *Vox Clamantis* who would say anything for money and cause good people to shut their ears or the faithless expressions of the lovers in the *Cinkante Balades* that cause them to turn away from each other.<sup>43</sup> Although 'Rethorique' itself is 'true' since it teaches divinely endowed discursive principles, many would perversely

37 English translation from the Loeb edition of the *Rhetoric* by John Henry Freese (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926).

38 Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 122.

39 On the meaning of *placent* in this context, see Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, pp. 238–39.

40 St Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. by R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 2, p. 50.

41 Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

42 CA Pro., ll. 113–14.

43 VC 4.22., ll. 1081–90.

abuse it.<sup>44</sup> As Aristotle and many of his followers argue, training in rhetoric allows for a verbal defence against such abuses and an opportunity to offer such words as 'please in the end' to an audience that might have been swayed in the beginning by empty eloquence.<sup>45</sup>

In Genius's 'Rethorique' lecture, Gower establishes a definition of the discipline capable of producing and supporting veracious speech. For Gower, this capacity depends upon subsuming logic, which distinguishes truth from falsehood, under the sway of 'Rethorique'. Although Gower follows Aristotle in bearing upon the persuasiveness of the truth, in order to render logic subservient, the medieval poet diverges from the famous first line of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* asserting that rhetoric is the 'counterpart' of dialectic (logical or philosophical debate).<sup>46</sup> It is not entirely clear what Aristotle means by 'counterpart': does the Philosopher make rhetoric logic's assistant, its equal, or its underling?<sup>47</sup> In any case, rhetoric is not logic's architectonic discipline, according to Aristotle. The Philosopher compares rhetoric and dialectic because both are speech arts unmoored from a particular subject area, and he distinguishes one from the other according to their respective arenas and genres: rhetoric is political, judicial, and dramatic, while dialectic is philosophical. Like Aristotle in Book I of the *Rhetoric*, Gower is interested in capacious boundaries for a field that includes a variety of legal, moral, and argumentative discourses and offers the practitioner choices in the best ways of forming these discourses. Concerning the incorporation of logic into the rhetorical paradigm, however, Genius declares that rhetoric and dialectic are not correlatives, as Aristotle asserts, each operating in its own generic spheres and resting its claims on different kinds of proofs, but instead that 'Rethorique' is, as we have seen, the field overarching logic.

Genius's discussion of the relationship between logic and rhetoric may differ from Aristotle's, but in raising the status of 'Rethorique', it accords with Giles of Rome's well-known thirteenth-century commentary on the *Rhetoric*.<sup>48</sup> Giles's thought is important not only for the respect it grants rhetoric but also for its explanations of Aristotelian pathos and the role of

44 St Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, 2.36, p. 54.

45 Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 1.13. St Augustine makes a similar comment about the need to study rhetoric in order to combat false arguments with true ones in *De doctrina Christiana*, 4.2, p. 3. See also, David K. Coley, *The Wheel of Language: Representing Speech in Middle English Poetry, 1377–1422* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2012), pp. 153–90. Coley argues that the 'Rethorique' lecture was written for the *Confessio's* Book 7 in order to teach how to avoid the sins of speech.

46 Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 1.1.

47 For a concise explanation of the first line of the *Rhetoric*, see George A. Kennedy, ed. and trans., *Aristotle, On Rhetoric*, p. 28, n. 2.

48 Aegidius Romanus, *Commentaria in Rhetoricam Aristotelis* (Venice, 1515; repr., Frankfurt: Minerva, 1968).

the passions in swaying belief. Giles's theories help to illuminate Gower's poems in which emotional display — the *vox clamantis*'s tears or Amans's impetuous desire — raises feelings that compel an audience to attend to reasonable persuasions and ultimately trust in worthy perceptions, doctrines, and ideas.

Rebutting Boethius's characterization of rhetoric as inferior to dialectic, Giles establishes rhetoric's supremacy in moving the human will to credence through motivating passions. While Boethius argues that rhetoric is a lesser subject than dialectic because the former treats contingent rather than eternal matters, persuades a judge rather than a worthy disputant, employs examples rather than syllogisms, moves the appetites rather than the intellect and refers to opinion rather than absolute proof, Giles reconfigures the purposes and operations of rhetoric while insisting on its importance. Giles's interpretation of Aristotle counters the Boethian injunction that rhetoricians compel only a fleeting adherence to arguments about particular cases while dialecticians absolutely convince their interlocutors about universals. Although upholding dialectic as the more speculative science since it concerns itself solely with the intellect, Giles demonstrates that rhetorical as well as dialectical situations could induce contemplation of universals.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, while agreeing that the audiences for rhetoric and dialectic differ, Giles does not insist that the former be a judge, but allows for a common member — *simplex et grossus* — of the community, thereby declaring rhetoric a popular and often political form of address.<sup>50</sup> A mass audience would find formal syllogisms tedious, so Giles maintains the traditional distinction between types of proof used in rhetoric and dialectic.<sup>51</sup> However, Giles's *Commentary* diverges from Boethian teachings in emphasizing that dialectical proofs are based on probable reasoning and command opinion, not necessary conclusions.<sup>52</sup> Significantly, this divergence from tradition leads to Giles's most radical relocation of rhetoric as opposed to dialectic. Since dialectic, and not rhetoric, is the realm of opinion, Giles writes, we must ascribe to rhetoric the realm of belief and acknowledge the intensity and endurance of its effects.<sup>53</sup> People cling to

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49 Refuting Alfarabi's contention that Aristotle distinguishes dialectic as the science of universals from rhetoric as that of particulars, Giles writes: *Nam res sunt cognitae secundum modum quo habent esse in intellectu; sunt vero volitae prout in seipsis. Nam verum et falsum sunt in anima. Bonum et malum sunt in rebus [...]. Sunt ergo res magis intellectae secundum esse universale, volitae vero secundum particularem existentiam.* See Giles of Rome, *Commentaria*, 1A.

50 Giles of Rome, *Commentaria*, 2A.

51 Giles of Rome, *Commentaria* 2A: *Instrumenta rhetoricae sunt enthimeme et exempla, dialecticae vero syllogismus et inductio*, 2A.

52 Giles of Rome, *Commentaria*, 1D: *Per rationes probabiles generatur opinio [...]*.

53 Giles of Rome, *Commentaria*, 1D: *fides aggeneratur sive credulitas [...]*.

their beliefs, Giles notes, much more steadfastly than to their opinions.<sup>54</sup> Hoping to implant Christian beliefs to which all can cling, Gower, as Stephanie L. Batkie so perceptively notes, deploys language rich in sound and pun that demands attention, opens the readers' ears, and leads them to credulity.<sup>55</sup>

Gower, in accordance with Giles's *Commentary* on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, also values rhetoric's ability to reach a mass audience, treat universals, and procure rational belief through emotional appeals, or *pathos*. As we have seen, Gower places both grammar and logic under the roof of 'Rethorique' and in so doing, implies that everyone from the children who study poetry to the scholars engaging in debate will hear discourses in rhetoric's house. Although he does not often speak to the *simplex et grossus*, Gower addresses a variety of audiences, sometimes even in the same poem, as in the *Vox Clamantis*, where the narrator speaks directly to God and Fortuna in Book 2 and to Richard II and to the legal community in Book 6. In modelling many of his writings on the *sermones ad status*, sermons directed to different levels of society, Gower's rhetorical challenge is to forge a single poetic form that accommodates a voice directed to divergent readers.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, this voice is often pitched at teaching what Gower considered to be universals in the context of contingencies. For instance, in 'In Praise of Peace', Gower teaches a central tenet of Christianity while addressing the particular moment of Henry IV's accession to the throne. As with his pleas for amity in 'In Praise of Peace', 'Rex Celi Deus', and Book 5 of the *Confessio Amantis*, so much of Gower's corpus is aimed at procuring rational belief and thereby inspiring prudent action.<sup>57</sup> If all his poetry does not contain a personification of Reason like the character in the *Mirour de l'Omme*, the arguments of Reason — for curbing the tongue, cooling a hot head, avoiding greed, or restraining sexual urges in order to reflect Christian virtues — are always heard, the pain caused by disruptive emotion making them worth the hearing. In following these arguments, Gower criticism has sometimes minimized the poet's investment in the passions as the means of procuring rational belief and encouraging

<sup>54</sup> Giles of Rome, *Commentaria*, 1D *Contingit autem aliquem adhaerere firmitus his quae credit quam his quae opinatur* [...].

<sup>55</sup> See Stephanie L. Batkie, 'The Sound of my Voice: Auralty and Credible Faith in the *Vox Clamantis*', in *John Gower: Others and the Self*, ed. by Russell A. Peck and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 45–47. Although Batkie is talking specifically about the *Vox Clamantis* in this passage, the same can be said for many of the poems in French and Middle English as well. The discussion in *John Gower's Rhetoric* of the use of *repetitio* throughout the trilingual corpus shows the poet's interest in sound to capture and hold the readers' attention on the way to acceding belief.

<sup>56</sup> Robert J. Meindl, trans., *Maria Wickert: Studies in John Gower*, 2nd edn (Tempe, AZ: MRTS, 2016).

<sup>57</sup> Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplary Narrative*, pp. 25–28; Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*.

prudent conduct. However, in focusing on rhetorical affect, Gower accords with the widespread fourteenth-century reception of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.<sup>58</sup>

Aristotle's rhetorical theory became popular to fourteenth-century writers who, like Gower, wanted to deploy emotions to move their audiences to higher purposes and socially productive actions. While one reason for the *Rhetoric*'s composition was to offer an art of argumentative discourse based in proofs, rather than solely emotional manipulation, Aristotle nevertheless gives significant analysis to the human passions and claims that 'Emotions [...] affect judgments'.<sup>59</sup> In Kathy Eden's words, 'For Aristotle, the agitation of the emotions does not preclude a reasoned judgment but accompanies one'.<sup>60</sup> The teachings on *pathos* in the *Rhetoric*'s Book 2 offer 'the earliest systematic discussion of human psychology', according to George A. Kennedy, and develop a practical, social-constructivist view of emotions and concrete approaches for stirring them through speech.<sup>61</sup> Aristotle describes rather than proscribes emotions as the confessional manuals do, and he therefore encourages medieval authors to take a scientific rather than a moral perspective on responding to and provoking emotions already incipient in the audience. Rita Copeland has charted the *Rhetoric*'s usefulness to late medieval English authors in providing a thorough discussion of emotions likely to be churning in certain kinds of hearers during particular sorts of speeches, a discussion present in none of the other classical authorities on rhetoric already known in medieval schools.<sup>62</sup> If fourteenth-century English authors interested in provoking and responding to the passions could not acquire access to one of the Latin translations of the *Rhetoric* that had been circulating for a hundred years, they might easily find Aristotelian tables of rhetorical concepts in

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58 Exceptions to the minimization of the importance of affect include Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*; T. Matthew N. McCabe, *Gower's Vulgar Tongue: Ovid, Lay Religion, and English Poetry in the 'Confessio Amantis'* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011); Steele Nowlin, *Chaucer, Gower, and the Affect of Invention* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2016).

59 Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 2.1. In the first chapter of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle decries previous treatments of the discipline (now lost) that do not acknowledge its core or discuss enthymemes, but instead focus on how to manipulate a judge by stirring up emotions relevant to the case (1.1, 1345a). Although this statement might be seen as a contradiction to Book 2's thorough treatment of emotions, David Konstan explains that Aristotle was arguing for enthymemes accompanied by *pathos*. Konstan also helpfully summarizes the scholarship on this issue. See David Konstan, 'Rhetoric and Emotion', in *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric*, ed. by Ian Worthington (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 413–15.

60 Kathy Eden, *Poetic and Legal Fiction in the Aristotelian Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 18, pp. 54–55.

61 Kennedy, Introduction to Chapters 2–11 of Aristotle: *On Rhetoric*, p. 122.

62 Copeland, 'Pathos and Pastoralism'; D. Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); M. K. Sokolan, *Political Emotions: Aristotle and the Symphony of Reason and Emotion* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006).

manuscripts such as Gray's Inn, MS 2 containing a 'Tabula ethicorum, politicorum et rethoricorum'.<sup>63</sup> There, under 'P', is a table concerning the passions and Aristotle's theory about them.

In his *Commentary* on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Giles, who was most likely Gower's source on pathos, explains how the passions contribute to persuasion, how they compel reasonable consideration and, consequently, right action.<sup>64</sup> Through this view of how the passions contribute to rhetoric, Giles reveals his understanding that in Aristotelian philosophy and the classical world, the emotions and the reason do not constitute a polarized binary, but instead, operate in tandem to arrive at logical conclusions. According to Martha Nussbaum, 'In Aristotle's view, emotions are not blind animal forces, but intelligent and discriminating parts of the personality, closely related to beliefs of a certain sort, and therefore responsive to cognitive modification'.<sup>65</sup> Speaking in his *Commentary* on the role of emotions in persuasion, Giles identifies rhetoric as a science of reason that convinces the intellect by first moving the appetitive will by means of the passions.<sup>66</sup> Gower's definition of the field — that rhetoric is 'the science/ Appropred to the reverence / Of wordes that ben resonable' — is quite similar, even though the medieval poet does not lay out the faculty psychology involved.<sup>67</sup> In his glosses on the *Rhetoric's* Book 2, where Aristotle describes human emotions and discursive appeals to them,

63 London, Gray's Inn, MS 2, fols. 177<sup>r</sup>–214<sup>v</sup>. Many thanks to Charles F. Briggs for sharing with me his knowledge of English manuscripts of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, related commentaries and appendices.

64 Brother S. Robert, 'Rhetoric and Dialectic according to the first Latin Commentary on the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle', *The New Scholasticism*, 31 (1957), 493.

65 Martha Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Emotions and Rational Persuasion', in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. by A. O. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 303. For an alternative view of emotions in Aristotle, see Jamie Dow, *Passions & Persuasion in Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

66 Both James J. Murphy in 'The Scholastic Condemnation of Rhetoric in the Commentary of Giles of Rome on the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle' in *Arts liberaux et philosophie au moyen age* (Montreal: Institut d'Etudes Medievales, 1969), pp. 833–41, and J. R. O'Donnell in 'The Commentary of Giles of Rome on the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle', in *Essays in Medieval History presented to Bertie Wilkinson*, ed. by T. S. Sandquist and M. R. Powicke (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 139–56, have noted that this definition implies a denigration of rhetoric. Since the intellect draws conclusions from its own thinking, but the appetites are drawn by the properties of things outside them, the ideas based on intellect alone must be more objective and thus more compelling. Giles himself notes this when he writes the following in the *Commentaria* 1D: *Per rationes dialecticas magis probatur aliquid esse verum* [...]. However, the conclusion of this sentence is *per rethoricas vero magis esse bonum* so that while dialectic may approach the truth more closely, rhetoric illuminates the good. According to the doctrine of Natural Law outlined in the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, Giles's teacher, the passions naturally tend toward the good, and thus operating upon the passions, rhetoric sways humans to fulfil their ethical potential.

67 CA 7, ll. 1523–25.

Giles explains the psychological mechanism by which rhetoric influences the intellect through the will and results in belief. Conceptualizing the passions that influence the will, Giles remarks that the emotions described by Aristotle reside in the sensitive aspect of the soul — between the vegetative aspect controlling the instincts and the rational aspect overseeing pure intellection. These passions, such as love or hate, are characterized by their object, and the sensitive soul reacts to objects of passion because of their qualities.<sup>68</sup> For instance, the sensitive soul would feel love because the person it regards is lovable. According to the doctrine of Natural Law promulgated by Giles's famous teacher Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*, the human passions influencing the will naturally tend toward the good in order for humans to incline toward participation in the eternal good.<sup>69</sup> Thus, in exciting the passions, rhetoric would draw good things to the audience's attention, thereby moving the will to prompt intellectual contemplation of the good: as Giles himself puts it, 'per [rationes] rhetoricas vero magis [probatur] esse bonum' (Indeed, through rhetorical proofs more is proven to be good).<sup>70</sup> Since in rhetorical discourse the will moves the intellect to probable reasoning, it initiates consideration of what would be good in contingent circumstances: it enables 'the activity of the practical man who uses his reason to discover and to promote practically the common good of society'.<sup>71</sup> Since, according to Giles, rhetorical discourse can also lead to contemplation of universals, the will can also prompt the intellect to extend its determinations on contingencies to conclusions based on universals. Beneficent thought and action occur when the will and intellect move in the same direction.

I have written previously on how the *Confessio Amantis* provides an Aristotelian psychomachia of Will and Intellect reaching agreement, of Amans (the Will) and Genius (the Intellect) finally concurring and merging into one authorial persona, John Gower.<sup>72</sup> Amans arrives at new beliefs about himself and his rightful place in the universe at the same time that the priest concludes his instructions and disappears into Venus's

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68 Giles of Rome, *Commentaria*, 49A: *Solum ergo erit passio in appetitu sensitivo, ut communiter ponitur, quia secundum appetitum trahitur ad condiciones objectorum [...]*.

69 Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. by Anton C. Pegis, 2 vols (New York: Random House, 1944). See 1–2, q.94, a.2.

70 Giles of Rome, *Commentaria*, 16A.

71 Robert, 'Rhetoric and Dialectic', p. 494.

72 Donavin, 'Rhetorical Gower', pp. 155–74. My reading there of Amans and Genius as representative of the Will and the Intellect in medieval faculty psychology correlates well with James Simpson's argument that these two characters are 'faculties of the same soul [...]' whose *Bildungsroman* [...] reveals the very subtle inter-relations of the sciences, particularly between ethics and politics'. See James Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's 'Anticlaudianus' & John Gower's 'Confessio amantis'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 135.



court. As a result, John Gower emerges a wiser man, moved by profound emotions to see the truth in Genius's penitential teaching. Throughout the confession, the lover's feelings of frustrated desire, jealousy, and anger have motivated him to listen to Genius's admonishments in hope of some relief. When the confession concludes, an emotional blow — the shock of realizing that he is an old man and not of love's 'kynde' — propels Amans to reunite with Reason and emerge as the venerable poet. The *Confessio Amantis* is not the only poem in which Gower shows the passions operating upon the intellect to produce rational discernment and conduct. For instance, 'Rex Celi Deus', as we shall see, inspires belief in the new king through the emotional swell of hymn-singing, and the *Cinkante Balades* encourages a more worthwhile focus on the Virgin Mother by engaging with the emotional turmoil of secular lovers. It is one project of this book to dwell on these representations of human feeling so as to connect them to Gower's rhetoric. As Irvin has observed, in the *Visio Anglie* and *Vox Clamantis* Gower often implants citations from Ovid's highly emotional *Tristia*, *Heroides*, or *Epistulae ex Ponto* in order to stir up feelings of exile from a broken English culture and motivate rational discourses of unification.<sup>73</sup> Beyond the necessity of exciting the emotions to lead the audience toward rational thinking and action, Gower, in much of his poetry, emphasizes the productive emotion of the speaker that motivates him or her to speak the truth in healing words.<sup>74</sup> The pity of the monarch for his people or the Virgin for all sinners propels their words of comfort and humane relief.

In thinking of rhetoric in Aristotelian ways, in privileging the persuasiveness of the truth and of the emotions that inspire consideration of it, Gower was participating in a long tradition begun when the first Latin translations of the *Rhetoric* appeared in Western Europe and continuing through the early modern period. From 1256 onward the *Rhetoric* was available in Hermannus Alemannus's flawed but easy-reading Latin translation,<sup>75</sup> a weak edition that nevertheless, according to Roger Bacon, demonstrates the superiority of Aristotle's teachings for moral argument: for moving the will so that the soul can participate in providence.<sup>76</sup> Much

73 Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, pp. 35–43.

74 Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, pp. 262–3.

75 Cambridge, Peterhouse College, MS 57 of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century and also Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 130 of the fourteenth century testify to extended life of Hermannus's early translation, even after the production of William of Moerbeke's superior Latin *Rhetoric* in the 1280s.

76 Eugenio Massa, ed., *Rogeri Baconis Moralis Philosophia* 5.2.6–7. (Zurich: Thesaurus Mundi, 1953), 251: Item, difficilius et minus delectabiliter se habet ad bonum, quam speculativus ad verum et ideo oportet quod maiora et forciora habeamus inductiva, ut scilicet flectamur ad credendum veritatibus circa bonum anime et ad operandum eas, et quatinus inclinamur ad iusticiam in causis ventilandis. Set r<e>thoricum argumentum potest in hec ergo huiusmodi

later, in the *Advancement of Learning*, Francis Bacon would declare, ‘The duty and office of Rhetoric is to apply Reason to Imagination for the better moving of the will’,<sup>77</sup> an Aristotelian statement relying on the same faculty psychology, popular from the classical period through the nineteenth century, that we have seen developed in Giles of Rome’s *Commentary on the Rhetoric*. Like Giles of Rome and John Gower, Francis Bacon promotes rhetoric for its ‘better moving of the will’, its power to harness either emotion or imagination toward forming rational conclusions. As we will see later in this chapter, the rhetorical style that most compellingly leads to the reasonable view, according to both Gower and Bacon, is the plain style. Francis Bacon’s definition of rhetoric refers to the psychological operations of both the speaker or author who deploys these forces and the audience who hears or reads the discourse. That is, the rhetorician must combine the mental operations of reason and imagination in order to move the audience’s will to accept the speaker’s contentions. This interest in the psychology of persuasion can be traced through references in the Middle Ages to Aristotelian rhetoric,<sup>78</sup> and it could be said of Gower as Karl Wallace remarks of Francis Bacon that ‘like Aristotle [...] [he] sees rhetoric as a practical art which is useful in controlling [the audience’s] wills and thereby their actions.’<sup>79</sup> From the Middle Ages to the early modern period, as Francis Bacon’s definition of rhetoric shows and an analysis of the *Confessio Amantis* has indicated, readings of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* focused on explanations of how straightforward, compelling language moves its listeners.

By grounding the *Confessio Amantis*’s lecture on ‘Rethorique’ in Aristotelian traditions, particularly those promulgated by Giles of Rome, Gower offers a theory of truthful discourse supported by both rational and emotional appeals. We turn now to the container of those appeals,

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*argumentum est nobis eligendum. Hoc autem argumentum non est notum vulgo artificum apud Latinos, quoniam libri Aristotelis et suorum expositorum nuper translati sunt et nondum sunt in usu studencium rethorica vero tulliana non docet hoc argumentum, nisi propter causas ventilandas, ut orator possit persuadere iudice, quatinus consenciat parti sue et indignetur adverse. Set flexus triplex est, ut dixi, et ideo hoc argumentum, ut Tullius docet, non sufficit, set indigemus completa doctrina Aristotelis et commentarorum eius.*

77 Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, 15 vols, ed. by James Spedding, R. L. Ellis, and D. D. Heath (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1879), 3, p. 409. See also Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, in *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, ed. by M. Kiernan, vol. 13 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

78 Basing his claims on the fact that Theodore Goulston, whose edition of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* appeared in 1619, presented a copy of his work to Bacon, Karl Wallace correlates Bacon’s theories of rhetoric with Aristotle’s. See Karl R. Wallace, *Francis Bacon on Communication and Rhetoric* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1943).

79 Wallace, *Francis Bacon*, p. 171.

the W/word. According to Gower, it is through the mystical properties of words that the truth can be made compelling and that emotions can be deployed in the interest of reasonable conclusions.

## The Word<sup>80</sup>

The 'word', invoked in the Latin head verse to the 'Rethorique' lecture and named twenty-nine times in 133 lines of Middle English, is the agent of persuasive discourse. It solicits the emotions compelling hearers to believe and conveys both celestial and earthly speech acts. Gower develops the word as signifier, enabler of all spells magical and rhetorical, and divine creative principle. To explain the power invested in language, Gower combines hermetic lore, an Aristotelian concept of the Prime Mover, and an Augustinian theology of the Word to claim that words 'enforme' (give form to) reality, just as the Creator gave form to chaos.<sup>81</sup> Its spiritual potential makes the word a gift to those involved in moral argumentation and a temptation to others who wish to mislead or divert the word's influence through black magic, alchemy, or deceitful rhetoric.<sup>82</sup> While venerating the word's power, the 'Rethorique' lecture cautions speakers to deploy it for ethical ends.

In the Latin head verse to the 'Rethorique' lecture, after citing the Aristotelian dictum on the persuasiveness of the plain case, Gower declares the authority vested in the word in hermetic terms: 'Herba, lapis, sermo, tria sunt virtute repleta, / Vis tamen ex verbi pondere plura facit' (Herb, gem, speech: these three are full of power, / Though the force proceeding from the W/word carries more weight). Here, the word is professed to be superior to numinous minerals and grasses — to the stones deployed in alchemical processes and plants arranged in charms or concocted in medicines. Without the alchemical or culinary intervention that elicits the power of the stone or herb, the word functions by itself as a transformative agent; indeed, the word constructs the incantations necessary for stones and herbs to effect change. Words form 'karectes' (written signs used in magic that Gower claims to be under the discipline of rhetoric) that con-

80 For a discussion of 'The Rhetoric of the Word' as it applies to Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, see Patrick J. Gallacher, *Love, the Word, and Mercury: A Reading of John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), pp. 1–25. Gallacher argues that the main purpose of the lover's confession is to bring all into accordance with the Word.

81 Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, p. 123. See the Middle English Dictionary, 'enformen' meaning 6 (a): 'phil. to give form to (matter, in the Aristotelian sense); to create.'

82 Georgiana Donavin, 'John Gower's Magical Rhetoric', *Accessus*, 6.2 (2021), <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/accessus/vol6/iss2/2/>>

nect stones and herbs to the astrological decans, thereby linking magical properties to the source of their influence.<sup>83</sup>

In the Middle English lecture that follows the Latin head verse, Genius repeats the claim of the word's superiority to other enchanted objects:

In ston and gras vertu ther is,  
Bot yit the bokes tellen this,  
That word above alle erthli thinges  
Is vertuous in his doinges,  
Wher so it be to evele or goode.<sup>84</sup>

Helen Cooper observes that this passage underscores the importance of the word and of poetry for Gower, 'for words have just such a power of metamorphosis, of transformation for worse or for better'.<sup>85</sup> The word is more efficacious in its 'doinges' than any other charmed substances because it is 'above alle erthli thinges': preeminent over other terrestrial materials and actually above them, the Word having come down from heaven to create them. Even without reference to stars, plants, and stones, the W/word holds sway over everything.<sup>86</sup>

As in the Latin verses, the Middle English lecture classes the word with magical substances and in so doing, encourages a materialist view of words that can be compared to objects and of language shaping thought. This mystical materialism is in line with Gower's grounding in Aristotle and in the *Secretum Secretorum*, an important source for the *Confessio Amantis* that will be discussed at more length in Chapter Four. The *Secretum* arises from the ninth-century Arabic *Sirr al-asrār* claiming to be Aristotle's book of advice to Alexander and to contain an exchange of letters between the philosopher and the conqueror. The text describes a secret treasure: a magical ruby ring that can empower and protect any ruler. While a gem

83 CA 7, ll. 1570–71. On 'karectes', see Tamara O'Callaghan, 'The Fifteen Stars, Stones, and Herbs: Book VII of the *Confessio Amantis* and its Afterlife', in *John Gower: Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation and Tradition*, ed. by Elisabeth Dutton, with John Hines and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), p. 145. 'Carectus' occurs as part of the discussion in CA 1, ll. 468–77 and CA 4, ll. 1336–54 and 2560–64. According to O'Callaghan, references to 'sorcerie' and 'karectes' woven throughout the *Confessio Amantis* pave the way for the word's association with magic.

84 CA 7, ll. 1545–49.

85 Helen Cooper, "'Peised Evne in the Balance": A Thematic and Rhetorical Topos in the *Confessio Amantis'* *Mediaevalia*, 16 (1993 [for 1990]), 134.

86 Maria Bullón-Fernández has cautioned that Gower experiences some disillusionment with the word as he develops its limitations in the *Confessio Amantis*; this chapter will argue that Gower's disappointment rests only in abuses of the supernatural word. See Maria Bullón-Fernández, 'Gower and Ovid: Pygmalion and the (Dis)illusion of the Word', in *Through a Classical Eye: Transcultural and Transhistorical Visions in Medieval English, Italian, and Latin Literature in Honour of Winthrop Wetherbee*, ed. by Andrew Galloway and R. F. Yeager (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 363–80.

encrusted with planetary dust is impossible to obtain, the text declares that lacking this ring, the ruler's talisman is his merit and the text that teaches virtue through which merit is won. The text of the *Secretum Secretorum* substitutes for the ring.<sup>87</sup> This cluster of ideas — the power in charms and stones infusing the noble person and existing parallel to prudent words — presents itself also in the *Confessio's* treatment of rhetoric.

Like the first two lines of the Latin head verse that compare straightforward argumentation favourably to verbal embellishments and suggest that rhetoric can be turned to both plain speaking and beautiful misdirection, the Middle English lecture acknowledges that the mighty word, more powerful than the *Secretum's* ruby, can both uplift and crush; its great efficacy does not depend upon the intentions for its use, despite its divine source. The word can be used beneficently or malevolently, forging or breaking alliances, angering or pacifying:

The wordes maken frend of fo,  
And fo of frend, and pes of werre,  
And werre of pes, and out of herre  
The word this worldes cause entriketh,  
And reconsileth whan him liketh.<sup>88</sup>

Words may cause amity or division, war or peace, strife or reconciliation. The chiasmus in the lines above, reversing the order of the words 'fo', 'frend', 'werre', and 'pes', illuminates the potential disruptiveness of the word as it inspires polarized feelings and exchanges one set of alliances for another. According to the *Confessio's* Book 7, it belongs to rhetoric to channel the word in beneficent ways, to invest words with the truth and to speak honestly, so that the word can fulfil its potential as 'techer of virtus'.<sup>89</sup>

Later in the 'Rethorique' lecture Genius will identify orators who convey the word in an ethical rhetoric and those who deploy the word in deceitful speech — respectively, Cicero, lauded for exposing the Catilinarian conspirators in Rome, and Ulysses, blamed for inciting Antenor to betray Troy. The speaker's position on verbal magic influences whether he uses words benignly. Ulysses — of whom Gower declares 'He was a gret rethorien, / He was a gret magicien' — especially underscores the deep connection between rhetoric and enchanting language and also the viciousness of deploying the word in spells that deceive.<sup>90</sup> Although Gower lists other magicians in a neutral way and discusses their forms of incanta-

<sup>87</sup> Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, pp. 42–43.

<sup>88</sup> CA 7, ll. 1574–78.

<sup>89</sup> CA 7, l. 1520.

<sup>90</sup> CA 6, ll. 1399–1400.

tion, he emphasizes that Ulysses is an untrustworthy verbal charmer.<sup>91</sup> Of all the necromancers treated in the *Confessio*'s Book 6, Ulysses is most like Nectanabus, master of the 'karecte', whose malignant spell over Olympias was so powerful that she believed him to be a god come to impregnate her with a divine child. Returning home from Troy, Ulysses might have used his magic to merely extricate himself and his crew from the threats of Calypso and Circe, but instead, he deploys his arts so that 'upon him thei bothe assote', and he conceives a child with Circe.<sup>92</sup> Both Nectanabus and Ulysses activate charmed words in the interest of lust, debasing the word's creative capacity in the engendering of illegitimate offspring.<sup>93</sup> In the 'Rethorique' lecture, Genius declares that Ulysses' advanced ability in oratory and conjuring allows him a special 'facounde / Of goodly wordes' (facility with goodly words) with which the hero disappointingly persuades Antenor to 'solde / The toun, which he with tresoun wan'.<sup>94</sup> In stark contrast to Ulysses' spellbinding delusions, in the conclusion of the 'Rethorique' lecture, Cicero and his faction become hero-orators offering a truthful and plainly spoken word for the good of the Republic. In both deploring Ulysses' corruption of Antenor and elevating Cicero's rhetoric, Gower elides incantations with false oratory. Cicero and his associates in the senate eschew spellbinding speech such as Ulysses deploys, whether the Trojan hero is mastering Circe and Calypso or engaging in espionage and war. While Ulysses manipulates the word to encourage immoral actions, Cicero polishes it with an honest ethos and clear diction in an effort to preserve Rome.

Gower seeks imitable examples of rhetoric from history and theories of the word's potential from hermeticism and Catholic theology, from classical and Christian perspectives. The hermetic approach in the Latin verses and beginning of the Middle English lecture, collapsing a reference to the

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91 Gower mentions Thābit ibn Qurrah and introduces Zoroaster as magic's inventor. See CA 6, ll. 1313–34. See also, Marsilio Ficino, *De vita triplici, libri tres*, ed. by Martin Plessner and Felix Klein-Franke (Hildesheim: Olms, 1978), book 3, chapter 32. Thābit ibn Qurrah al-Harrānī, *De imaginibus*, in *The Astronomical Works of Thabit b. Qurra*, ed. by Francis J. Carmody (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).

92 CA 6, l. 1458.

93 On Ulysses' use of his arts, see Claire Fanger, 'Magic and Metaphysics of Gender in Gower's "Tale of Circe and Ulysses"', in *Re-Visioning Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Charlotte, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998), pp. 203–19.

94 CA 7, ll. 1560–63. Gower manifests in Ulysses' character the same connection that David Rollo sees in twelfth-century authors between sorcery and verbal manipulation. As Rollo explains concerning high medieval historians that emphasize their command of the written word, the 'author [is] projected as magician and the written medium he controls designated through a lexicon that collapses the verbal arts with glamorous sorcery (*gramaire/grimoire*), performative conjuring (*praestigia*), intoned spells [...]: See David Rollo, *Glamorous Sorcery: Magic and Literacy in the High Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. xii.

word's mystical properties with an argument about truth in discourse from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, is characteristic of the entire passage that relies on an assortment of old 'bokes'.

Consonant with Gower's disgust over deceptive verbal magic is his interest in the rhetoric lecture on Hermetic 'bokes', associated with Hermes Trismegistus, that teach alchemical incantations — spells aimed not to betray women and opponents in war but to produce the Philosopher's Stone. Gower lists Hermes as the originator of alchemy in the *Confessio's* Book 4 and cites him in Book 7's treatment of astronomy, where a discussion of the stars bridges the narration of Nectanabus and his 'karectes' with Genius's lecture on the arts and sciences.<sup>95</sup> Seb Falk observes that the figure of Nectanabus represents both the sophistication of Gower's astronomical sources and the corruption of many who tout what the stars can reveal.<sup>96</sup> As with the contrast between Ulysses and Cicero, and with the general point that the word is open to both use and abuse, Gower acknowledges two kinds of alchemists throughout the *Confessio*: those of old who were able to achieve the Philosopher's Stone and those of his own time who cannot. Scholars such as Stephanie L. Batkie and Matthew W. Irvin have revived discussions of Gower's hermeticism, comparing alchemy to rhetoric and recalling the scientific sources that G. C. Macaulay and George Fox long ago discovered in the *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>97</sup> The long passage in Book 4 on Labour mentioning Hermes Trismegistus while encouraging Amans to counteract amorous sloth initiates a comparison

95 CA 7, l. 2606 and ll. 2457–2605. Macaulay argues that Gower relies on the *Liber Hermetis de xv stellis et de xv lapidis et xv herbis, xv figures, etc.*, or on another unidentified source. See G. C. Macaulay, ed. *The Complete Works of John Gower*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899–1902), 1, p. 522. See also George Hamilton, 'Some Sources of the Seventh Book of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', *Modern Philology*, 9 (1912), p. 343. In *The Medieval Sciences in the Works of John Gower* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931), pp. 80–81, George C. Fox offers a short discussion on the stones, plants, and stars in Gower. Tamara O'Callaghan points out that no one has identified in what form Gower received such hermetic literature, whether in translation or in Latin. See O'Callaghan, 'The Fifteen Stars, Stones, and Herbs', p. 140; Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science During the first Thirteen Centuries of Our Era*, 4 vols, 6th edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 1, pp. 287–92; Jim Tester, *A History of Western Astrology*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), p. 24 and pp. 62–63; Seb Falk, 'Natural Sciences', in *Historians on John Gower*, ed. by Stephen H. Rigby with Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2019), pp. 491–526.

96 Falk, 'Natural Sciences', pp. 518–20.

97 Recent discussions of alchemy and language in the CA include Stephanie L. Batkie, "Of the parfitte medicine": *Merita Perpetuata* in Gower's Vernacular Alchemy', in *John Gower, Trilingual Poet*, ed. by Elisabeth Dutton, with John Hines and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), pp. 157–68; Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, pp. 199–203; See also Robert Epstein, 'Dismal Science: Chaucer and Gower on Alchemy and Economy', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 36 (2014), 209–48; Clare Fletcher, "The science of himself is trewe": Alchemy in John Gower's "Confessio Amantis", *South Atlantic Review*, 79.3–4 (2015), 118–31.

between rhetoric and alchemy by setting textual and alchemical labour side by side.<sup>98</sup> There a discourse on the industry dedicated to inventing the means of writing, starting with creating the alphabet and culminating in Ciceronian speeches, immediately follows a passage on the toil of producing the Philosopher's Stone. While ancient alchemists or rhetoricians such as Cicero accomplished transformative labours, however, such metamorphosing industry has all but disappeared, according to the *Confessio's* Book 4; not willing to endorse alchemy as performed in his own generation, Gower points out that contemporary practitioners do not understand the teachings of the ancient masters or have the experience to arrive at the Philosopher's Stone.<sup>99</sup> In Steele Nowlin's estimation, Gower believed that fourteenth-century alchemists and poets fail in the same way: supposed experts go through the forms (whether they follow *formulae* in alchemical treatises or guides to poetic structures in the *artes poetriae*), but are missing the force of invention to alter metals or move readers.<sup>100</sup>

For Gower, the W/word is not only a numinous property akin to the Philosopher's Stone, but it is more importantly the sanctified method for creation that is enacted in Genesis, proclaimed by the Gospel of John, and theorized by St Augustine: a verbal instrument that might be used in honour of God's making or in dishonourable manipulations of the truth. The opening of Genius's Middle English lecture on 'Rethorique' directly connects the word to creation through allusions to Genesis and St John's writings:

Above alle erthli creatures  
The hihe makere of natures  
The word to man hath gove alone,  
So that the speche of his persone,  
Or for to lese or for to winne,  
The hertes thoght which is withinne  
Mai schewe, what it wolde mene;  
And that is noghwhere elles sene  
Of kinde with non other beste.<sup>101</sup>

Here, Genius recalls that in the garden God gave the W/word — both speech and salvation — to no other animal, but to humans alone.<sup>102</sup> The

<sup>98</sup> CA 4, ll. 2363–95.

<sup>99</sup> CA 4, ll. 2580–83. See Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic*, p. 167; Nowlin, *Chaucer, Gower, and the Affect of Invention*, pp. 138–39.

<sup>100</sup> Nowlin, *Chaucer, Gower, and the Affect of Invention*, pp. 138–39.

<sup>101</sup> CA 7, ll. 1507–15.

<sup>102</sup> Genesis 2. 20. In the *Generation of Animals, Politics, Problems*, Aristotle famously comments on how speech separates humanity from beasts. See Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, p. 120. In addition, the Ciceronian myth of how rhetoric made civilization and lifted



W/word is the special province of every Christian, who is obligated to speak honestly in accord with intentions.<sup>103</sup> Indicating humanity's status in creation and making Adam and Eve's existence possible, the word is also the redeeming gift of Christ, as the Gospel of John makes clear: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.'<sup>104</sup> Because 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth', according to St John, humanity is called to imitate Christ in words of grace and truth.<sup>105</sup> Words are the vehicle for such imitation, since they reproduce similitudes of God. In the letters of St John, sinning is a reverse declaration, turning a Christian's testimony of the Word to a lie, and lies betray that 'his word is not in us.'<sup>106</sup> The beginning of the 'Rethorique' lecture invokes the speaker who maintains the Word within and offers the discipline as a conduit for 'the speche of his persone'.

Just as God expressed thoughts in Eden and redemption in the body of Christ, he invested humanity alone with speech so that each person could express interior thoughts. St Augustine remarks on the similarity between the revelatory capacity of words for each person and the incarnation of the Word. In the *De doctrina Christiana*, after quoting from 1 Corinthians 1. 21 ('the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us'), Augustine has this to say:

It is as when we speak. In order that what we are thinking may reach the mind of the listener through the fleshly ears, that which we have in mind is expressed in words and is called speech. But our thought is not transformed into sounds; it remains entire in itself and assumes the form of words by means of which it may reach the ears without suffering any deterioration in itself. In the same way the Word of God was made flesh without change that He might dwell among us.<sup>107</sup>

Augustine dwells on the integrity of the thought or the godhead that inhabits the W/word, and Gower pursues a rhetoric of integrity in which

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humankind from bestiality — a myth that Kim Zarins argues to be so important to Gower's rhetoric — is developed in the *De inventione* (1.2.2.). See Zarins, 'Gower and Rhetoric', pp. 38–39. On the mythical origins of Grammar, see Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*, p. 12; pp. 102–04.

<sup>103</sup> Schmitz, 'Rhetoric and Fiction', pp. 127–28.

<sup>104</sup> John 1. 1–3.

<sup>105</sup> John 1. 14.

<sup>106</sup> 1 John 1. 10. See also 1 John 2. 4: 'He who says "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him [...]':

<sup>107</sup> St Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, 1.13.

the ‘word [is] lich to the conceite / Withoute semblant of deceite.’<sup>108</sup> For Gower, words should capture the ‘hertes thoght’ that preserves Christian virtue, an honest semblance. According to Augustine, just as words that are granted solely to humanity put form to thought without changing the meaning, so Christ the Word, who is granted to sinful humankind, took flesh without vitiating the godhead. Augustine’s remarks reflect a theological perspective based upon the gospel by John the Evangelist, whom we will identify in the next chapter as one of the most important voices in Gower’s poetry. St John the Evangelist is recognized in medieval art as the ‘Logos-Creator’, linking all that is created through the Word to the image or likeness of God.<sup>109</sup>

It is a pure, incarnational language — based on the mystical word, but sturdy enough for political discourse — that Gower promotes in the ‘Rethorique’ lecture. One way to maintain pure and ethical speech is to view oratory as an opportunity for *imitatio Christi*, for a continued projection of the image of God in which, according to Genesis 1. 27, humans were made. In this way, the Christian W/word enacts an incarnation in everyday discourse. In the ‘Rethorique’ lecture, Gower acknowledges that ‘the Word was God’ by claiming ‘With word the hihe God is pleased [...]’, an allusion to the Baptism and Transfiguration narratives in Matthew, Mark, and Luke in which God the Father identifies his Son, in whom He is ‘well pleased.’<sup>110</sup> According to Genius, Christ ‘the word under the coupe of hevene / Set everything or odde or evene’: while the word, invested with magical power, can inspire good or ill, and while rhetorical strategies might be used for beneficial or destructive purposes, Christ, manifesting the Word, balances moral forces and recuperates sinful speech.<sup>111</sup> The word reproduces God’s nature in the world by manifesting similitudes, terrestrial images of God, enabling authentic communication. A pure custodianship of the Word in moral rhetoric is necessary for imitating Christ and for Gower’s project of upholding virtue and eradicating vice through speech. As we will see in Chapters Three and Five of this book, the Virgin Mary, who bore the Word and was believed to be St John’s adoptive mother, exemplifies a verbal integrity that might counteract the many sinful rhetoricians excoriated throughout Gower’s poems.

Against perversions of speech as exemplified by Ulysses, Nectanabus, contemporary alchemists, and hypocritical people, a Christian rhetoric that moves its audience through the divinized word can move the audience’s will toward right and reasonable belief. In contradistinction to

108 CA Pro, ll. 113–14.

109 Jeffrey E. Hamburger, *St John the Divine: The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 2.

110 CA 7, l. 1581. Matthew 3. 17 and 17.5; Mark 1. 11; Luke 3. 22.

111 CA 7, ll. 1579–80.

contemporary alchemical enchantments that fail to transform base metals, a rhetoric of the Word turns pre-Christian precepts exemplified by Aristotle and Cicero to salvific gold. In St Augustine's famous remarks in the *De doctrina Christiana* on the appropriation of classical rhetoric for preaching, he advises Christian orators to imitate the Israelites who, in Exodus 12. 35, ask their neighbours for gold, silver, and clothing before departing from Egypt. Augustine enjoins his readers to make a Christian stash out of Egyptian gold, to take from the classical rhetoricians what is 'dug out of the mines of God's providence' and suited to Christian discourse.<sup>112</sup> This Gower does in the 'Rethorique' section of the *Confessio Amantis* and throughout his work, and while many medieval writers applied the same method, we will see Gower's originality in positioning biblical figures and constructs amidst classical rubrics. In the *Confessio Amantis's* lecture on rhetoric, Gower combines classical theories with Christian ideas concerning the W/word to present a philosophy of discourse that serves for his trilingual corpus.

In the next section of this chapter, we will investigate the forms and styles through which the mystical word, according to the 'Rethorique' lecture, operates upon its audience to induce belief. While abhorring figurative speech that masks, twists, or obscures intent, Gower affirms the use of figures of repetition in a plain style to move emotions and propel the reader toward truth.

## Cicero and the Plain Style

Alan Gaylord may be right that C. S. Lewis did Gower's reputation no favour when branding the fourteenth-century poet a master of the plain style, as if of dowdy elocution.<sup>113</sup> In contrast to lacklustre language, however, a plain style deploying appropriate diction and verbal adornments based in repetition allowed the medieval poet to tap the moral force of the Word and the emotions conducive to honest teaching and ultimately persuasion. Gower's consistent preference for literary plain speaking did not mean uniform strategies for elocution across his trilingual corpus; on the contrary, Gower created a highly wrought Ovidian cento to inveigh against the Uprising in the *Visio Anglie* and imported well-known topoi from romance literature for the speech of his love-lorn narrators in the

<sup>112</sup> St Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, p. 40, p. 60.

<sup>113</sup> Alan Gaylord, "'After the Forme of my Wrytynge': Gower's Bookish Prosody", *Mediaevalia*, 16 (1993 [for 1990]), 257. C. S. Lewis made the comment about Gower's plain style in *Allegory of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 201. He contends that Gower's plain style is pleasant because it is a well-organized and uncluttered treatment of the subject at hand that allows for the poet's voice to come through clearly.

*Cinkante Balades*. In these ways and more, Gower was sensitive to the requirements of *dispositio*, the need to select language appropriate to each effort, judicious stylistic choices always meant to clarify the storyline or the message of each poem. While he used the plain style everywhere for instruction — for Genius’s definitions of the mortal sins or accusations against the estates — he opted elsewhere for the ornate language of praise and prophecy or for the complex figures used by his poem’s sources. Most of these choices involve linguistic repetitions of sounds, words, or phrases that imprint the storyline or message in the memory. In this section of the chapter we will determine why Gower privileged a plain style in the *Confessio*’s ‘Rethorique’ lecture and associated it with ‘Cithero’. Even if the plain style does not rule each of Gower’s poems, the Ciceronian model of the forthright orator pervades the trilingual corpus.

In the ‘Rethorique’ lecture, Genius draws Amans’s attention to the Ciceronian plain style by making reference to the Catilinarian orations as summarized by Cicero, reported in Sallust and rehearsed by Latini for models of both helpful and harmful rhetoric: of truth versus falsehood, ethics versus personal advantage and embellishments versus clarity.<sup>114</sup> ‘Cithero’ occupies the first term in these binaries and uses the plain style. When the Catilinarian conspirators were brought to trial, Decimus Junius Silanus, consul-designate and ‘Cillenus’ in Gower, was the first to give his opinion for the execution of the traitors in a speech that Genius declares to be a bulwark of ‘trouthe’ and ‘comun profit’.<sup>115</sup> ‘Cithero’ and Cato, or ‘Catoun’, confirm Cillenus’s conclusions, delivering ‘a tale plein withoute frounce’, and drawing the conclusion that ‘[t]her mai no peine be to strong’ for such traitors.<sup>116</sup> As Götz Schmitz observes, Gower adapts the representation of the Catilinarian debates in Latini to emphasize the plain-spokenness of Cicero, Cato, and Cillenus, speakers in whom Latini is less interested because their speeches have little to teach about rhetorical manipulations.<sup>117</sup> According to Genius, the Latin speeches of Cicero and Cato simply assert the legal grounds for executing traitors, without highly wrought diction or argumentative manoeuvres. This is the plain style that Gower imitates in the didactic portions of his poetry in all languages.

For Gower, the plain style had roots in Graeco-Roman expectations concerning purity of language and pointed argumentation, dating back to Aristotle’s mandate in Book III of the *Rhetoric*: ‘let the virtue of style [...]

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114 J. B. Greenough, *Select Orations and Letters of Cicero* (Boston: G. L. Kittredge, Ginn & Co., 1902).

115 CA 7, ll. 1607–09.

116 CA 7, ll. 1594, 1614.

117 Schmitz, ‘Rhetoric and Fiction’, p. 122.

be defined as 'to be clear' [...].'<sup>118</sup> In this statement Aristotle is referring in part to the legal speeches he studied for which the most basic requirements were a simple narrative of the facts and a direct argument for the litigant's case.<sup>119</sup> Expanding greatly upon Aristotle's sparse commentary on elocution, Cicero and Quintilian valued *ratio plane loquendi*, native words used in customary ways for the sake of perspicuity.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, although used more often for its list of figures of speech and thought, taught fourteenth-century schoolboys that clarity resides in appropriate diction.<sup>121</sup> Gower's plain style eschews complex ornamentation or foreign neologisms that have no basis in *consuetudo* (customary use) and offers, instead a straightforward language whose lessons are underscored by figures based in repetition.<sup>122</sup> Although it has been noted that Gower's Latin poetry — and especially his later Latin works — increase in rhetorical adornment and might better be described as ornate than plain, I argue that even in these poems, Gower's adornments are mostly based in repetition — in threads of alliteration, recurring words, redeployments of Ovidian verses, and multipresent symbols — that underscore or make plain a single idea, rather than sacrifice directness for the many avenues of figured speech.<sup>123</sup> This is not to equate the style of Gower's denser

118 Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 3.2. Aristotle's mandate on clarity coincides with Priscian's *Liber constructionum* in *Institutionum Grammaticarum* 17–18, Internet Archive, <<https://archive.org/details/PriscianiInstitutionumGrammaticarumLibri/PriscianiInstitutionumGrammaticarumLibriXiii-xviii/hertz.1859/>>. Schmitz notes that Gower's preference for clarity and simplicity of language derives from Aristotle and was transmitted in Cicero's *De inventione*. See Schmitz, 'Rhetoric and Fiction', p. 121.

119 Eden, *Poetic and Legal Fiction*, p. 14.

120 See Cicero, *De oratore* III. 39–49 and Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* VIII.ii. 1–11.

121 *Ad Her*, IV, p. 17.

122 In emphasizing Gower's use of customary diction, I do not deny that he invented interesting expressions, for instance, 'swete toth' (sweet tooth) that, according to Richard Newhauser, comes into English for the first time in the CA. See Richard Newhauser, 'John Gower's "Sweet Tooth"', *Review of English Studies*, 64 (2013), 753–69.

123 Schmitz argues that in the first book of the CA Gower's announcement that he is changing his 'Stile' (CA 1, l. 8) means that the poet is abandoning the more ornate style of his Latin verse, represented in CA's epigrammatic Latin poems, for a plain style in the vernacular. See Schmitz, 'Rhetoric and Fiction', p. 118. There are two major objections to Schmitz's characterization of Gower's stylistic intentions for Middle English. One is that in the stanza where Gower is announcing his change in style, the poet is referring to an alteration in subject matter, rather than a shift in elocutionary registers; he intends departure from discussing the state of the world to featuring the ways of love. The second is that not all of Gower's Latin verse is ornate. David R. Carlson points out that for the *Visio Anglie* Gower invented a plain style of unrhymed Latin verse that was suitable for public poetry and so attractive that many other fourteenth-century poets adopted it. See David R. Carlson, 'The Invention of Anglo-Latin Public Poetry (circa 1367–1402) and Its Prosody, especially in John Gower', *Mittelalterliches Jahrbuch*, 39.3 (2004), 389–406. Carlson does note that Gower's later Latin verse becomes increasingly elaborate. See David R. Carlson, 'A Rhyme Distribution Chronology of John Gower's Latin Poetry', *Studies in Philology*, 104 (2007),

and more complex Latin verses with the free-flowing didacticism of the *Confessio Amantis*, but rather to point out that in their common purpose to reveal the truth, all of these texts rely on principles of eloquence that will lay a moral bare, not cover it. Gower was aware of the *genera dicendi* (levels of style, including high, middle, and low) and of adaptations to them made by Augustine and more contemporary preachers to reach different audiences.<sup>124</sup> Like an *ad status* sermon that is directed at a particular class or group, Gower's writings deploy perspicuous diction in repetitive patterns to deliver a message directed to a given audience. Where puns or other kinds of double entendres occur, they underscore the direction of the narrative rather than lead away from it.

Throughout the *Confessio Amantis* and explicitly in Genius's lecture on 'Rethorique', Gower demonstrates that a plain style supported by repetition is most appropriate for a rhetoric of the Word that can move the passions toward intellectual truth and right belief. Maura Nolan's perceptive observation that a plain style can offer a 'vivid rendering of sensory data' helps us to understand this process.<sup>125</sup> Passions arise from sensory appeals inspired by the W/word and move the human will to rethink a compelling issue. Gower's 'public poetry of the Ricardian period', as famously labelled by Anne Middleton, deploys the plain style for affective discourses that are nevertheless reasonable and restrained, discourses that '[speak] for bourgeois moderation, a course between the rigorous absolutes of religious rule on the one hand, and, on the other, the rhetorical hyperboles and emotional vanities of courtly style'.<sup>126</sup>

For an example of plain and reasonable discourse, Gower turns in the finale of the 'Rethorique' section to the speeches by Cato, Silanus, and Cicero during the Catilinarian debates. He mentions these orations because they illustrate a form of elocution that is most desirable, 'a tale plein withoute frounce'.<sup>127</sup> The most ardent speaker against the Catilinarian

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49. Maura Nolan confirms Carlson's study of the trajectory of Gower's style. See Maura Nolan, 'Sensation and the Plain Style in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', in *John Gower: Others and the Self*, ed. by Russell A. Peck and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 120–21. Carlson's main point that Gower's later Latin verse became more intricate with rhyming patterns does not necessarily support a view that the poet's rhetoric became more elaborate. After Henry IV's accession, Gower was still writing plain style Latin poems such as 'Rex Celi Deus', and the *Cronica Tripartita*, which is one of the best examples of the poet's use of leonine rhymes, presents a straightforward and linear narrative of the Lancastrian triumph — a narrative cast in allegory, granted, but one simple enough to be explained thoroughly in the poem's short Latin glosses.

124 Copeland, 'The Ciceronian Rhetorical Tradition', p. 240.

125 Nolan, 'Sensation and the Plain Style', p. 113.

126 Anne Middleton, 'The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II', *Speculum*, 53 (1978), 95.

127 CA 7, l. 1594. In this line and others, Gower is using the spelling 'plein' or 'pleine' for the word elsewhere rendered in Middle English as 'plain' or 'plaine'. For the meaning

rebels was Cicero, believed by most medieval students to be the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, whose fourth book amplifies on the figures of speech and thought that adorn discourse, and therefore thought to be the arbiter of style. As we shall see, however, Gower distinguishes between 'Cithero' and 'Tullius', designating the former the exemplar of the favoured plain style and the latter the author of rhetorical handbooks such as the *ad Herennium*, whose advice can be used for good or for ill. This is not ignorance on Gower's part, as I shall show below, but perhaps an early glimmering that the *ad Herennium* was not composed by Cicero, as is now well known. Gower adheres to 'Cithero' for choosing the simple and repetitive figures of speech that will underscore 'the pleine trouthe'.<sup>128</sup> 'Tullius', on the other hand, lists stylistic strategies from which one might 'pike' to overlay a plain tale:

Bot for to loke upon the lore  
 Hou Tullius his Rethorique  
 Componeth, ther a man mai pike  
 Hou that he schal hise wordes sette,  
 Hou he schal lose, hou he schal knette,  
 And in what wise he schal pronounce  
 His tale plein withoute frounce.<sup>129</sup>

Whereas 'Tullius' teaches how to choose and reset words to advantage, how to wax expansive or knit the discourse tightly, 'Cithero' aims to preserve the 'tale plein' as much as he can 'without frounce'. By advocating for the plain style, Gower, through Cicero, fulfils a promise made at the beginning of the *Confessio Amantis* 'plainly for to telle' the matter of this poem.<sup>130</sup> After providing an Aristotelian definition of the field and expounding upon the Word, Genius intends to illustrate the practical uses of 'Rethorique' as propagated by 'Tullius' and practised by 'Cithero'. In order to explain Gower's distinction between these two rhetoricians and his advocacy for the plain style, it is necessary to investigate what 'Cithero' and 'Tullius' would have meant to the medieval poet.

Stories have long swirled around the use of Cicero's *tria nomina*, Marcus Tullius Cicero. According to Plutarch, when Marcus Tullius Cicero began his political career and friends advised him to drop the *cognomen* (Cicero) meaning 'chick pea', the aspiring young man vowed to make his name more important than Scaurus or Catullus (Swollen Ankles or The Puppy). Beyond Cicero's pitting chick peas against creaking joints and

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Gower intends here, see the Middle English Dictionary, 'plain(e adj.)' 3.: 'plain, simple, unadorned [...]':

<sup>128</sup> CA 7, l. 1638.

<sup>129</sup> CA 7, ll. 1588–94.

<sup>130</sup> CA 1, l. 71. See Nolan, 'Sensation and the Plain', pp. 121–22.

canines, there is also the tale of a dedication he made to the gods in Sicily when he was quaestor: he had his *praenomen* Marcus and *nomen gentilicium* Tullius inscribed on a silver plate, then called for an engraver who might depict a chick pea.<sup>131</sup> If the *cognomen* Cicero was even in the orator's days the butt of jokes among Middle English authors who often invoked Cicero's authority, it was smaller still than the chick pea: hardly ever used, though certainly known. Langland, Hoccleve, and Lydgate all use 'Tullius' exclusively when referring to Ciceronian eloquence, and Chaucer refers to 'Marcus Tullius Scithero' only once (in the Franklin's Prologue). Because citations of Cicero's *cognomen* are so infrequent among Middle English authors who treat rhetorical theory, Gower's use of it in the 'Rethorique' lecture's exemplum of the Catilinarian debate, along with the mention of 'Tullius' in the passage above, signifies the medieval poet's desire for precision in discussing the history of rhetoric.

As he does in the 'Rethorique' lecture's mention of 'Tullius' as an author of composition manuals and 'Cithero' as a speaker against Catiline, Gower refers to 'Tullius' and 'Cithero' as separate persons throughout the *Confessio Amantis*. For instance, according to Genius in a lecture on the history of language and literature, 'at Rome also / Was Tullius with Cithero'.<sup>132</sup> In 1962 James J. Murphy thought that Gower's allusions to two people, one 'Cithero', one 'Tullius', expressed the poet's ignorance, but in light of more recent scholarship by Rita Copeland, Steele Nowlin, Diane Watt, Kim Zarins, and others unearthing the sophistication of Gower's rhetorical tools, it is much harder to conceive the poet's lack of awareness of Cicero's full name.<sup>133</sup> One deciding factor is that the text which everyone agrees is an important source for Gower's treatment of rhetoric, Brunetto Latini's *Trésor*, uses Cicero's *tria nomina* more than once to describe the orator's participation in the Catilinarian debates, so it would have been nearly impossible for Gower not to associate the 'Tulles' whose *De inventione* Latini summarizes with the litigant in the well-known conspiracy that we will be examining later in this chapter. At the very least, Gower would have recognized that Marcus Tullius Cicero and the 'Tulles' or 'Tullius', author of rhetorical manuals, were related by the same *nomen gentilicium*. Why, then, might Gower refer to both a 'Cithero' and a 'Tullius'?

131 Plutarch, 'Cicero', in *Lives*, ed. by Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library, 99 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 8, pp. 81–210.

132 CA 4, ll. 2633–34.

133 Murphy, 'John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', p. 409; Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 179–220; Copeland, 'Lydgate, Hawes, and the Science of Rhetoric', pp. 57–82; Nowlin, *Chaucer, Gower, and the Affect of Invention*, pp. 93–150; Watt, *Amoral Gower*, pp. 107–48; Zarins, 'Gower and Rhetoric', pp. 37–55.



One answer lies in academic debates swirling around the *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, two texts widely attributed in the Middle Ages to Cicero's early period and used in rhetoric classrooms. The *De inventione*, many believed, developed the first office of rhetoric (invention), while the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* completed the instructions with lessons in the additional offices: arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. The attribution of both texts to Cicero and the theory of a continuous treatise on rhetoric, however, were challenged by inconsistencies between the two texts. In 1492 Raffaele Regio's *Quaestio* rebutted the most common medieval view that Cicero had authored the *ad Herennium*, but discussions of the radical differences between these texts flourished centuries before.<sup>134</sup> Many medieval glossators, interested in preserving a coherent Ciceronian tradition for classroom use, highlighted the inconsistencies between the two manuals by attempting to reconcile the differences. William of Champeaux's gloss on the *ad Herennium*, as it is characterized by John Ward, illustrates the impulses to synthesize and render consistent the supposed *juvenilia* of Cicero. Counting twenty-five cross-citations in the commentary's comparison between the *rhetorica prima*, the *De inventione*, and *secunda*, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Ward shows how William minimizes disagreements between the texts, such as those in status theory (an approach to invention through key questions) or characterizations of narrative types, and how 'all discrepancies between the two texts are explained as if the difference were more apparent than real'.<sup>135</sup> And yet, as has often been noted of penitential manuals detailing the seven deadly sins, the sermon on virtue also describes the way to vice, and the same can be said of gymnastic expositions of Cicero's dual authorship: the more tortured, the more plausible the case being rebutted. Occasionally, a commentator finds himself on the other side of the debate, as in a gloss from Durham Cathedral Library, on the relationship between the *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, transcribed and translated by Karin Margareta Fredborg. As Fredborg writes, 'At least one commentator remarked that there was a discontinuation between what Cicero promised at the end of the *De inv.* and what was found in the *Ad Her.*'<sup>136</sup> Given the centuries

134 James J. Murphy and Michael Winterbottom, 'Raffaele Regio's 1492 *Quaestio* Doubting Cicero's Authorship of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: Introduction and Text', *Rhetorica* 17.1 (1999), 77–87.

135 John Ward, 'Master William of Champeaux, and Some Other Early Commentators on the Pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*', in *Public Declamations: Essays on Medieval Rhetoric, Education, and Letters in Honour of Martin Camargo*, ed. by Georgiana Donavin and Denise Stodola (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 14–15.

136 Karin Margareta Fredborg, 'Ciceronian Rhetoric and the Schools', in *Learning Institutionalized: Teaching in the Medieval University*, ed. by J. Van Engen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), pp. 22–23. Durham, Durham Cathedral Library, MS C.IV.29, fols 201<sup>vb</sup>–202<sup>ra</sup>.

of debate surrounding the connection between the *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, it is possible that Gower developed a practice like Mary Carruthers's economical references in her scholarship to 'Cicero' for all works proven to be his and to 'Tully' for the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.<sup>137</sup> If this is the case, Gower would look to 'Cithero' as a practitioner of the plain didactic style in the *De inventione* and *Orations against Catiline* and to 'Tullius' for the complete discussion of eloquence in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* from which one might choose the plain style.<sup>138</sup>

A second answer to why Gower refers to both 'Tullius' and 'Cithero' lies in the way that the *artes poetriae* name and teach aspiring writers to think about Cicero. One *ars poetriae* well known among late Middle English writers might have encouraged them to use different names for the Roman orator, as Gower does, and to associate the teaching of 'Tullius' with sweetness of eloquence. In the *Poetria Nova* Geoffrey of Vinsauf refers to 'Cicero' when citing the *ad Herennium* on the seven ways of amplifying a theme and to 'Tullius' under the theory of determinations.<sup>139</sup> In this way, Geoffrey links 'Cicero' to extended explanations and 'Tullius' to a kind of sweetness in discourse created by determinations, the way in which determiners attach to nouns. Persuaded by Geoffrey of Vinsauf and other teachers that a honeyed style is the brand of 'Tullius', Middle English poets often connect 'Tullius' to sweetness. For instance, William Langland lists 'Tulius' in the company of others who had supplied medieval authors with suave and effective proverbs.<sup>140</sup> In the *Regiment of Princes*, Thomas Hoccleve laments that Death '[d]espoillid hath this land of the swetnesse / Of rethorik, for unto Tullius / Was nevere man so lyk amonges us'.<sup>141</sup> In

137 Mary Carruthers began to refer to 'Cicero' for the works definitely authored by him and 'Tully' for Ciceronian works of uncertain attribution in *The Book of Memory: The Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 307 n. 116.

138 The CA is not the only poem in which Gower associates the wide array of figures of speech with 'Tullius'. MO, l. 14674, mentions Jerome's chastisement for wanting to learn to speak 'du Tulle'.

139 Geoffrey Vinsauf, *PN*, ed. by Edmond Faral (Paris: Champion, 1924), 1251; [Cicero], *Ad Her*, trans. by Harry Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 4, xliii, 56–57. On amplifying a theme, Geoffrey of Vinsauf encourages the reader to seek more information about it in 'Cicero' (in the *Ad Herennium*): *De re: quos omnes lege plenius in Cicerone* (qtd. in Faral, 235). But Geoffrey also refers to 'Tullius' under the theory of determinations, in an example whereby one noun determines another. In this example, the use of Cato as an exemplar reels out into a list of other men famous for their attributes: 'You are Cato in intelligence, Tully in eloquence, Paris in beauty, Pyrrhus in strength (*Poetria Nova*, 1775) or *Es Cato mente Tullius ore, Paris facie, Pirrusque vigore* (qtd. in Faral, 251).

140 William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A New Annotated Edition of the C-Text*, ed. by Derek Pearsall, 2nd edn (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), XII, l. 177.

141 Thomas Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*, Middle English Texts Series, <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/blyth-hoccleve-regiment-of-princes-introduction>>, ll. 2084–86.

the *Fall of Princes*, *Life of Our Lady*, *Mummings and Entertainments*, 'Pageant of Knowledge', *Siege of Thebes*, and more, the monk of Bury, John Lydgate, always calls Cicero 'Tullius'. Here, in the *Isopes Fabules*, Lydgate apologizes for his lack of eloquence: 'And though I have no rethoryk swete, / Have me excusyd; I was born in Lydgate. / Of Tullius gardeyn I passyd nat the gate [...]'.<sup>142</sup> For late Middle English poets who learned their craft from the *artes poetriae* in generic allusions to rhetoric, lists of famous authorities on the subject, and especially those who mastered the sweet style, 'Tullius' was their man. 'Tullius', as Mary Carruthers has shown, became associated with the aesthetics of sweetness so prevalent in the Middle Ages that it was deemed obvious and unworthy of study until her important *Speculum* article on the subject.<sup>143</sup> 'Tullius' for these poets means 'stylistic ornamentation', not the plain style that Gower valued. Gower uses the name 'Tullius' as do Langland, Hoccleve, and Lydgate (as a purveyor of sugared discourse) and reserves 'Cicero', as does Geoffrey of Vinsauf, for the one who explains the truth fully in a forceful plain style.

Like Lydgate's apology for being born outside Tullius's garden gate, the humility topos was, as Ernst Curtius long ago demonstrated, a ubiquitous strategy to capture the benevolence of various medieval audiences.<sup>144</sup> The most famous of these in Middle English poetry — and an exception to the 'Tullius' rule — is the one given by Chaucer to his Franklin in *The Canterbury Tales*. Although Chaucer, too, generally identifies Cicero by the *nomen gentilicium* 'Tullius' for all texts from *De amicitia* to *De senectute*, the Franklin utters the entire *tria nomina*. To quote the entire passage from the Franklin's Prologue:

But, sires, by cause I am a burel man,  
At my bigynnyng first I yow biseche,  
Have me excused of my rude speche.  
I lerned nevere rethorik, certeyn;  
Thyng that I speke, it moot be bare and pleyn.  
*I sleep nevere on the Mount of Pernaso,*  
*Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Scithero.*  
*Colours ne knowe I none, withouten drede,*  
But swiche colours as growen in the mede,  
Or elles swiche as men dye or peynte.  
Colours of rethoryk been to me queynte;

142 John Lydgate, *Isopes Fabules*, Middle English Texts Series. <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/text/wheatley-lydgate-isopes-fabules>, ll. 31–33>.

143 Mary Carruthers, 'Sweetness', *Speculum*, 81 (2006), 999–1013.

144 Robert Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, With a New Introduction by Colin Burrow* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

My spirit feeleth noght of swich mateere.  
but if yow list, my tale shul ye heere.<sup>145</sup>

While Chaucer scholarship debates the Franklin's perspective and Chaucer's craft in endowing him with these lines, what is most pertinent here is that the unusual mention of Cicero's *tria nomina* equates the Roman orator's name to books or bodies of knowledge concerning rhetoric. While Langland, Hoccleve, and Lydgate all invoke 'Tullius' the man, Chaucer's Franklin presents 'Marcus Tullius Scithero' as a text or locus for learning the 'colours' of rhetoric. For the Franklin, 'Marcus Tullius Scithero' seems to signify Book IV of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, a compendium of style and a menu of 'queynte' choices for the aspiring tale-teller. Without the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*'s instructions, the Franklin claims, the narrator must settle for a tale 'bare and pleyn'. Gower, it is clear, means to recuperate the plain style as an effective mode of eloquence of Ciceronian truth-telling and does so by making the plain style the brand of 'Cithero'.

Therefore, while interpretations of the inherent differences between the *De inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium* flourished centuries before Raffaele Regio's *Quaestio* appeared, and while an important manual for Middle English poets modelled different uses of Cicero's name — reliance on the *cognomen* for the master of conceptual elaboration and on the *nomen gentilicium* for the purveyor of verbal sweetness — the stage was set for Gower to deploy the name 'Cithero' for a plain-spoken orator in the Catilinarian debate and the name 'Tullius' for the teacher of rhetorical style. In the 'Rethorique' lecture, Genius speaks of both 'Tullius [who] his Rethorique / Componeth, ther a man mai pike / Hou that he schal hise wordes sette', and Cithero, / Which consul was of Rome tho' during the senate debates'.<sup>146</sup> Characterization of a 'Cithero' who lays out the case against the Catilinarian conspirators and a 'Tullius' who wrote a rhetorical manual on the figures of speech is like Geoffrey of Vinsauf's reference to 'Cicero' on amplifying proof and 'Tullius' on discriminating style. It aligns with common practice among Middle English poets who associate 'Tullius' with style when they allude to Ciceronian rhetoric, and it correlates roughly to a division between the 'Cicero' of the *De inventione* who elaborated on topics for argument and the 'Tullius' of the *ad Herennium*

145 Geoffrey Chaucer, Franklin's Prologue, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1986), ll. 714–28. Emphasis mine. On the appearance and pronunciation of 'Scithero' in fourteenth-century Latin manuscripts, see R. A. Pratt, 'The Importance of Manuscripts for the Study of Medieval Education, as Revealed by the Learning of Chaucer', *Progress of Medieval and Renaissance Studies in the United States and Canada*, 20 (1949), 43–51.

146 CA 7, ll. 3107–09 and ll. 3114–15.

who supposedly completed the rhetorical paradigm with instructions in style and more.

Whenever Gower invokes 'Tullius', he does so with reference to teachings on rhetorical style in the manner of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Book IV. While in Book 4 of the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower notes that both Cicero and Tullius have 'writen upon Rethorike', in Book 7, the poet distinguishes Tullius's 'Rethorique' as the text demonstrating the ways 'a man mai pike / Hou that he schal hise wordes sette', in other words, which figures of speech and thought 'a man' might deploy. In the 'Rethorique' lecture, 'Cithero' chooses among these figures for a straightforward speech on Roman law. In Book 8, as the poet takes his leave of this long poem, he, like 'Cithero', disavows the curious rhetoric or 'thilke scole of eloquence' that 'Tullius som tyme wrote', that teaches 'the forme of rethorike / [...] wordis for to peinte and pike'. 'Picking and painting' imply a deceitful selection and false colouring of phrases, in other words an immoral use of discourse.<sup>147</sup> Irvin notes, for instance, one of the number of times in which Gower obviously breaks the stylistic rules taught in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: in the Latin verses that introduce the satire on the Commons in the *Confessio Amantis*'s Prologue, Gower stacks three aphorisms on top of each other for a thickly layered accusation of animalism among the people, in contradiction to the *ad Herennium*'s warning about piling on too many maxims to avoid overgeneralization.<sup>148</sup> In this case, like many others, Gower means to underscore a painful truth, rather than to display singularly beautiful language. Gower claims adherence to 'Citheronianism' by rejecting a certain kind of stylistic choice offered by Tullius that involves both picking words and painting them. In the end, Gower acknowledges that the elocutionary brush was often placed in his hand, but he dropped it along the path to a plain style when he departed from false colouring of expressions in favour of supporting the plain style to which 'Cithero' adhered.

All the while that the *Confessio Amantis* is developing an ambivalent position on Tullius's *Rhetorica ad Herennium*-like instruction on elocution, Gower describes Cithero as the author of an unidentified rhetorical manual and as an orator whose speeches against Catiline might be analysed for their plainspokenness. As Ralph J. Hexter says concerning Ovid, who was the poet most cited by Gower, medieval commentators expressed awareness 'that there were several medieval Ovids' expressed in titles

147 On Gower's connections between the colours of rhetoric and immorality, see Schmitz, 'Rhetoric and Fiction', pp. 124–29.

148 Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, p. 65. For the dictum in the *Ad Her*, see Harry Caplan, trans., *Ad C. Herennium de Ratione Dicendi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 4.17.25.

such as *Ovidius epistularum*, *Ovidius de sine nomine*, or *Ovidius de Ponto*.<sup>149</sup> Gower would certainly have known this convention and might have been applying the same strategy to Cicero. In Gower, who had legal training and certainly a fascination with the Roman past, we see the tantalizing possibility that the debates in the commentaries establishing the Ciceronian corpus, the references in Geoffrey of Vinsauf to the Cicero of two names, and the associations by other Middle English poets between Tullius and stylistic sweetness all lit a pre-Renaissance glimmer that the writer of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* ought to be designated by his own special name. In doing so, it would not have been unusual for Gower to flesh out a characterization of Tully's Ciceronian counterpart 'Cithero' through study of the Catilinarian debates. According to Fredborg, medieval scholarly efforts to create a complete Ciceronian biography through analysis of the senate debates date back to the twelfth century, when Thierry of Chartres and Alan of Lille concluded that the model speeches for the grand and middle style in the *ad Herennium* are the recordings of speeches actually given by Cicero against Catiline.<sup>150</sup> In Gower's view, 'Tullius' would have presented speech-recordings of 'Cithero' in order to model levels of style.

Reckoning with the three levels of style — low for teaching, middle for pleasing, and high for moving — Gower elevates the low (plain) discourse in Cithero's explanations of Roman law and questions the ethics of a rhetoric from Tullius's Book 4 that, in the medieval poet's estimation, aimed only at pleasure. Gower's understanding of the *genera dicendi* is essentially a 'Citheronian' view mediated by St Augustine. Having digested Cicero's recommendation in the *Orator* for a plain style in teaching, St Augustine agreed that a simpler language is best for moral instruction, a purpose often owned by Gower.<sup>151</sup> For Augustine, the instructor's words ought to reflect the style of scripture, which is 'poured forth from the divine mind both wisely and eloquently, not in such a way that wisdom was directed to eloquence, but in such a way that eloquence did not abandon wisdom'.<sup>152</sup> Gower praises in 'Cithero' an eloquent wisdom in clarifying legal precedents for punishing Catiline and his men, and the medieval poet privileges the plainest style as the solid ground of truth upon which various parts of a speech could be laid. Gower understood the three styles as Augustine had defined them according to Cicero's *Orator*: that to 'teach is a necessity, to delight is a beauty, to persuade is a triumph'.<sup>153</sup>

149 Ralph J. Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling: Studies in Medieval School Commentaries on Ovid's Ars Amatoria, Epistulae ex Ponto, and Epistulae Heroidum* (München: Bei der Arboe-Gesellschaft, 1986), p. 211.

150 Fredborg, 'Ciceronian Rhetoric in the Schools', pp. 30–31. Caplan, *Ad Her*, 4.9.13.

151 Cicero, *Orator*, 2.1.60. Quoted in Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, 4.12.27.

152 Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, 4.7.21.

153 Augustine, *De doctrina*, 4.12.27.

And yet neither the Bishop of Hippo nor Gower after him could imagine a plain, instructive style entirely without verbal ornament; for them, the low and middle styles could exist symbiotically, the attractive attributes of discourse that aim to please holding in place the audience's attention to scriptural training. As Augustine remarks, '[I]f [teaching] be done without grace of style, the benefit does not extend beyond the few eager students who are anxious to know whatever is to be learnt', and like Augustine, Gower approved rhetorical embellishments such as *repetitiones* that affixed the audience to good teachings.<sup>154</sup> As for the high style, Gower relies on it sparingly — in the *Visio Anglie* and later Latin poems, at the beginning of the *Confessio's* Book 8 — but like Augustine's Ciceronian theory, Gower connects the *genera dicendi* to interlocking Christian purposes, and with his use of reiterative figures of speech to underscore limpid expression, Gower demonstrates how the low, plain style that instructs and clarifies can also move a reader to adherence through the force of repetition.

While in the 'Rethorique' lecture Genius approves the plain style in Silanus, Cato, and Cicero and connects it to the power of the reiterative Word, the priest also provides a 'Tullian' foil to 'Citheronian' speech: Julius Caesar, who argues the unconstitutionality of subjecting Roman citizens to capital punishment and begs the senate's leniency with the Catilinarian conspirators, doing so with an impressive splash of elocution. Caesar, according to Gower, provides an exemplar of the middle style for its own sake. Caesar supplies — to return to the language of the rhetoric lecture's Latin head verse — the 'verba [quae] placere poterunt' (words that will be able to please) — but not the 'verba vera' (true words) that please in the end. While Caesar temporarily moves his senate colleagues to pity, Cicero's orations — revealing Catilinarian plots against his own life and pointing to the civil war that indeed ensues — convince the senate to punish the traitors. Caesar's words enchant and represent the classical middle style whose goal is to please, but through the contrast between Caesar and Cicero, Gower contends that the true goal of oratory is to support the truth. As Ann Astell observes, Gower does not follow Latini's *Trésor* in praising Julius Caesar's speech, possibly because the medieval poet saw parallels between the Catilinarian conspiracy and the hostility of Richard II and his inner circle to the Duke of Gloucester, Earl of Arundel, and Earl of Warwick.<sup>155</sup> I would add that the poet saw abuses of Tullius's teachings on the figures of speech. According to Genius's discussion of the Catilinarian orations, Caesar 'the wordes of his sawe / Coloureth in an other weie', while Silanus, Cicero, and Cato had 'spieken plein after the lawe'.<sup>156</sup> In the 'Rethorique' lecture, Caesar, choosing rhetorical flourishes

<sup>154</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina*, 4.11.36.

<sup>155</sup> Astell, *Political Allegory in Late Medieval England*, pp. 85–86.

<sup>156</sup> CA 7 ll. 1624 and 1623.

for a corrupt middle style that temporarily sways the senate, adheres to 'Tullius' and adorns his style with figures of speech that do not, in Gower's estimation, accurately reflect the events of the Catilinarian conspiracy.

A military man as well as a senator, Caesar, according to Genius, was flouting Roman concerns that excessive training in speech would vitiate the masculinity of the farmer or the soldier, whose talk should be plain and straightforward.<sup>157</sup> Quintilian, though admittedly available only in fragments during Gower's time, compared a speaker who experiments obsessively with style and delivery (such as Caesar in the *Confessio's* narrative) to men who shaved their bodies, curled their hair and wore makeup.<sup>158</sup> Therefore, as Diane Watt points out, the 'colouring' of Caesar's language is synonymous with makeup or other sorts of false ornamentation that feminize and cheapen, while the plain style applies for straight men and straight talk.<sup>159</sup> Outside of the 'Rethorique' lecture, Gower will offer a counterbalancing feminine oratory — moral, brief, plain, and reasonable — in his presentations of Marian rhetoric. In addition, the poet sometimes defends speech reflecting non-binary genders, as we shall see in Chapter Three. *Confessio*, Book 7, however, emphasizes the rhetorical practices of men. The masculine rhetoric of frank openness eschewed by Caesar, but promoted by Aristotle, 'Cithero', and Gower, Joy Connolly notes, derives from longstanding classical traditions. Of Roman instruction, she writes:

Rhetorical education was designed to instil in Roman boys habits that would make their masculinity literally visible to the world: along with constructing logical arguments, handling narration and interrogation, and creative ways to use words, they learned to stand up straight, look others straight in the eye, gesticulate with grace and authority, and speak with easy confidence.<sup>160</sup>

Determined to perpetuate these traditions, Gower laments the ways in which they are no longer observed; for instance, in the *Vox Clamantis* he wonders how the gestures of delivery indicating manly scorn — the raised eyebrow and the smoothing down of the sides — have died.<sup>161</sup> In contrast to Roman and medieval masculinizing performances, Julius Caesar's speech, according to Genius, is an example of misguided, feminine

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157 See Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Representation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Erik Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010); Myles McDonnell, *Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

158 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratorio*, 2.5.12.

159 Watt, *Amoral Gower*, p. 49.

160 Joy Connolly, 'Virile Tongues: Rhetoric and Masculinity', in *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, ed. by William Dominik and Jon Hall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 86.

161 VC. 7. 9., l. 732.



rhetoric because it is a fake façade, an adornment of falsehood encouraged by Tullian precepts of elocution. In Gower's treatment of rhetoric, truth requires only sparing embellishment whose purpose is to reinforce accurate arguments. Stopping short of presenting the final results of the Catilinarian orations, David K. Coley contends, Gower 'shifts the emphasis away from the *potentia* of deceptive speech and toward the moral and ethical dimensions of speaking itself [...]'.<sup>162</sup> As rhetorical affiliations go, this means turning away from the potentially effeminizing 'Tullius'.

Gower supported and mimicked the heteronormative style of 'Cithero', but recognized the limits of plain speech. The Catilinarian conspirators may have been executed as a result of plain references to the law, but Catiline remained at large until a bloody battle against his rebel forces. In addition, Richard II had not listened to frank advice, as Gower judged it; struggles between the regent and parliament multiplied until the deposition. Despite the estates satires of the *Mirour de l'Omme* and *Vox Clamantis*, major reforms to the church, state, and commons had not occurred. Under these circumstances, and in the realization that, as Gower in the *Confessio*'s Prologue admitted concerning himself, 'I may noght strecche up to the hevene / Min hand, ne setten al in evene / This world, which evere is in balance', Gower constructed other styles and other gendered voices.<sup>163</sup> He directed the dense and intricately wrought Latin verses in the *Confessio Amantis*, as Joyce Coleman has shown, to an upper class of educated clerics who could tease out the puzzles there.<sup>164</sup> He deployed a grand style in all languages when invoking God's magnificent creation or imitating prophecy. As a counterpart to the didactic, masculine rhetoric that Gower's narrators cultivate to convey the poet's *propria persona* or the *vox populi*, voices calling upon both popular opinion and divine inspiration that Irvin helps us hear more clearly,<sup>165</sup> Gower observes the Marian rhetoric that we will explore in Chapter Three.

Even when Gower is teaching in a masculinist plain style, as in the *Mirour de l'Omme*'s explications of Sin's origins or in *Cinkante Balades*' climactic portrayal of Reason, he cultivates one stylistic ploy for hammering the message home and creating order out of disorder: a sermonic repetition. This stylistic flourish does not 'colour' speech but underlines it; as Jeffrey Wills remarks, figures of repetition carry 'little to no semantic value' to change the meaning of discourse.<sup>166</sup> Instead, they reiterate key

162 Coley, *The Wheel of Language*, p. 162.

163 CA 1, ll. 1–3.

164 Joyce Coleman, 'Lay Readers and Hard Latin: How Gower May Have Intended the *Confessio Amantis* to be Read', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 24 (2002), 209–34.

165 Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*.

166 Jeffrey Wills, *Repetition in Latin Poetry: Figures of Allusion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 3.

arguments and redouble the emotions associated with various points of view.<sup>167</sup> As Helen Cooper has noticed, many of Gower's reiterations and parallelisms are balanced syntactical structures to correct the imbalances in the world.<sup>168</sup> She notes that Gower strove for the 'highest music in the combination of harmony with words; and poetry, words in harmony, can play its part in setting "every thing [...] evene"'.<sup>169</sup> Cooper writes that 'the *Confessio* shows an especial fondness for parison, corresponding structures of syntactic units, the scheme Englished by Puttenham in the Renaissance as "the figure of even"'.<sup>170</sup> In lines such as 'Now hier now ther, now to now fro, / Now up now down, this world goth so [...]', Gower deploys repetition to weight the scales of an unstable world.<sup>171</sup> The plain style is associated with the balance Gower sought to achieve because, as Maura Nolan points out, it is a lower level of discourse grounded in teaching, the elocution of evenness, a 'planus'.<sup>172</sup> In the final chapter of *John Gower's Rhetoric*, we will see how multiple repetitions are inscribed in manuscripts meant for rhetoric teaching and how in the early modern period, Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare taught and reduplicated Gowerian repetition.

Gower's *repetitiones* are constituted by apostrophes, puns, rime riche, and more — but especially by anaphora, a reiteration of the opening of the poetic line.<sup>173</sup> *Anaphora* is, in effect, the 'in principio' of all figures of speech, reminding the reader of the line position where all ideas and matter have their beginning. It is fitting, then, that Gower gives a full demonstration of how anaphora works in the 'Rethorique' lecture's discussion of the W/word.

Word hath beguiled many a man;  
With word the wilde beste is daunted,  
With word the serpent is enchaunted,  
Of word among the men of armes  
Ben woundes heeled with the charmes,

167 Hubert M. Poteat, *Repetition in Latin Poetry with Special Reference to the Metrical Treatment of Repeated Words* (New York: Classical Association of the Atlantic States, 1912), p. 7.

168 Cooper, 'Peised Evene in the Balance', pp. 113–40.

169 Cooper, 'Peised Evene in the Balance', p. 114.

170 Cooper, 'Peised Evene in the Balance', p. 116. See George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. by Gladys D. Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), III, xix. Cooper remarks that '[p]arison itself is a Greek term that does not appear in any of the major Latin rhetoricians, and first appears in English at the Renaissance' (136, fn. 3).

171 CA Pro, ll. 569–71. Quoted in Cooper, 'Peised Evene in the Balance', p. 117.

172 Nolan, 'Sensation and the Plain Style', p. 127.

173 Masayoshi Itô has documented 650 rime riche couplets in Gower's French and English verse. See Masayoshi Itô, *John Gower, the Medieval Poet* (Tokyo: Shinozaki Shorin, 1976), pp. 214–31.

Wher lacketh other medicine;  
 Word hath under his discipline  
 Of sorcerie the karectes.<sup>174</sup>

With the initial repetition of 'Word / With word / Of word' these lines underscore the great capacity of speech. The repetition at the beginning of the line reminds that poetic invention and indeed all creation begins with the Word. The word beguiles humanity, arrests the wild beast, enchants the serpent, heals wounds, and constructs charms. With this cascade of anaphora, how might anyone fail to understand the vast influence of the mighty *verbum*? The word, available for both good and bad speech — for beguilement as well as for healing — must be controlled by the 'Citheronian' rhetorician who unleashes its power to teach audiences well.

In the passage above *anaphora* creates a benign incantation (in contrast to Ulysses' deceiving enchantments) that accentuates the breathtaking reality of the Word. Through a repetitive plain style, the Word acts more forcefully on the human will — continually propels it with emotions such as the awe invoked by these lines — toward understanding. The passage demonstrates the Augustinian positions on the presence of the Word in language and on the *genera dicendi*. It reveals how a central tenet concerning creation, magnified by pleasing repetition, can be effectively taught. As William Covino notes, all formulaic discourse meant to change minds or behaviours has something in common with spells, and ending the passage above with 'karectes', Genius admits that his definition of rhetoric encompasses sorcery. Through anaphora Gower casts an enchantment that can compete with those of Ulysses, even while it underscores rather than obfuscates the truth.<sup>175</sup> Genius's impassioned delivery is an example of 'white' rhetorical magic, with *repetitiones* returning to an eternal truth; the priest's elocution can be distinguished from both Ulysses' verbal embellishments serving 'black' magic and Caesar's feminized discourse that, according to Gower, promulgates falsehoods. In Book 6, the transition between the magical arts and the Aristotelian arts, Genius shows how Ulysses is punished by Telegonus for the dishonest conjuring that sexually enslaved Circe. Describing how Telegonus unwittingly slays his own father, Genius's moral eloquence, again underpinned by repetition, is an antidote to Ulysses' false speech. The priest declares: 'Thurgh Sorcerie his lust he wan / Thurgh Sorcerie his wo began, / Thurgh Sorcerie his love he ches, /

<sup>174</sup> CA 7, ll. 1564–71.

<sup>175</sup> William A. Covino, *Magic, Rhetoric and Literacy: An Eccentric History of the Composing Imagination* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 16–24. For a discussion of magic in the *Confessio Amantis* that also involves Ulysses the rhetorician, see Claire Fanger, 'Magic and Metaphysics', pp. 203–20.

Thurgh Sorcerie his lif he les'.<sup>176</sup> Through the same *anaphora* deployed to teach the Word's *virtu*, Genius's 'conjunction' presses on the priest's main point — the evil of sorcery used to control and diminish others. In accordance with the recommendation of many medieval *artes praedicandi* and practice in sermons even today, Genius's use of repetition provides a sort of beneficent conjunction offsetting duplicitous, falsely figured speech. As in the old adage, the truth bears repeating.

In addition to anaphora's alliance with the Word and creative beginnings, it is one of Cicero's favoured figures in the *Orations against Catiline*, as the opening of his sentences repeatedly call out to the conspirators, address his senate colleagues, and list the rebels' crimes. The plain style that 'Cithero' represents in Gower provides a template for Genius's use — and use by any speaker or author who desires to deliver the unadulterated truth to an audience. Throughout Gower's corpus, whether or not in the plain style, *repetitiones* — and especially those in initial positions — ensure that compelling and accurate discourse will not be ignored.

## Conclusion

After Gower's time and a century of highly wrought, aureate poetry and rhetoric, early modern philosophers and scientists would also seek a limpid style similar to the one advocated in the *Confessio's* 'Rethorique' lecture for discourses that could lay discoveries bare. As Russell A. Peck has shown, it is no surprise that Gower would anticipate later scientists, because the medieval poet's interest in 'science' was considerable.<sup>177</sup> In the *Confessio Amantis* alone, his multifaceted treatment of human cognition in the exchanges between Amans and Genius and his dedication to preserving the seven 'sciences' in Book 7 demonstrate Gower's deep commitment to investigating and conveying what can be known. Just as Gower's Aristotelian rhetorical theory foreshadows that of Francis Bacon, Gower's predilection for the plain style predates approaches to elocution by early modern scientists who strove for straightforward and clarifying expressions. While Christopher Cannon argues that the plain style is common among fourteenth-century authors because of the straightforward diction in their basic language-learning texts, Gower was somewhat unusual among these authors in treating scientific information in plain style

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<sup>176</sup> CA 6, ll. 1769–72.

<sup>177</sup> Russell A. Peck, 'Gower and Science', in *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*, ed. by Ana Sáez-Hidalgo, Brian Gastle, and R. F. Yeager (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 172–96.

verse and in thus anticipating rhetorical movements among members of the Royal Society.<sup>178</sup>

Where Gower did not foreshadow renaissance elocutionary movements toward a plain style was in his veneration of the W/word. According to Ryan Stark, new scientists like Bacon advocated for the plain style in an effort to divorce language from the mystical properties that Gower valued in 'verba'; for Bacon and others, those properties were the purview of witches and magicians, not of clear-eyed investigators conducting Aristotelian forms of experimentation and reporting tested conclusions.<sup>179</sup> Mystical language, with the biblical history of Adam's naming and the focus on the creative act of the Word, was an important consideration in Gower's 'Rethorique' lecture, but when the new thinkers referred to a plain style, they meant a reference to 'a non-enchanted understanding of tropes [...]'.<sup>180</sup> In the English Reformation, when Catholic 'superstition' involving reiterative prayers was roundly criticized, 'The advancers of learning [...] did not want to cast spells while arguing against spell casting, and so they resolved to write in a plain way', according to Stark.<sup>181</sup> In contrast, Gower, cautiously interested in hermetic texts and committed to Catholic theology, promulgated the plain style in scientific discourses and thus set the course for thinkers such as Bacon, but retained a belief in the W/word's potency and in its ability to move the passions and right the intellect, especially through plainly accurate statements.<sup>182</sup>

In Gower's 'Rethorique' embracing Aristotelian theory, Augustinian theology, and Ciceronian style, we see a fascinating 'middel weie' between magical language and scientific inquiry, between Catholic exegesis on the liberal arts and secular approaches to public oratory, between the plainest discourse and the reiterative figures of speech that loop audiences back to the truth.

178 Christopher Cannon, *From Literacy to Literature: England, 1300–1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 92–99.

179 Ryan Stark, *Rhetoric, Science, and Magic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009).

180 Stark, *Rhetoric, Science, and Magic*, p. 9.

181 Stark, *Rhetoric, Science, and Magic*, p. 204.

182 On the reception of Gower's hermeticism, see Curtis Runstedler, 'Transmuting John Gower: Elias Ashmole's Hermetic Reading of Gower's Jason and the Golden Fleece', *Accessus*, 6.2 (2021), <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1058&context=accessus>>.



## My Name is John

### *Biblical Ethos and Apocalyptic Narrative*

In order to accomplish the aims of rhetoric eventually outlined in Genius's lecture on the discipline, Gower chooses to imitate biblical prophets and preachers with his own first name and an unimpeachable ethos: John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. The former, providing Gower with a *vox clamantis in deserto* for multiple poems, is the prophetic forerunner of Christ mentioned in all four gospels, and the latter, whose theology of the Word and eschatological visions structure Gower's language and poetic dreams, was believed to be the most beloved disciple, author of the Gospel of John, three epistles, and the Book of Revelation.<sup>1</sup> Together the Saints John illustrate a complex model for many of Gower's first-person male narrators. This chapter will explain how the poet invokes his saintly namesakes in order to move the passions through the mighty Word and progress in styles appropriate to preaching and prophecy toward faith and reason. We have already noted how the Evangelist's theology yields some of the most important principles of Gower's 'Rethorique'. Passions such as arise in the preaching and prophecy of both Saints John — contrition in John the Baptist's *vox clamantis* or holy fear in John the Evangelist's visionary writings — infuse Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*, *Vox Clamantis*, *Cronica Tripartita*, and *Confessio Amantis*. They contribute to the articulation of hard truths: plain-spoken warnings against sin, directives for a peaceful life in Christian community, and fables involving the violent end of times. These counsels, sometimes spoken directly to British monarchs, are advanced for the good of England and promoted with all the rhetorical skill the poet can muster through his complex and multi-layered biblical ethos, in an effort to prepare the people spiritually for an apocalypse.

Through a Johannine ethos, Gower reflects English devotional practices and writes with urgency in an age which he considered to be dominated by the Antichrist. Eamon Duffy's work reveals the late medieval popularity of the Baptist and the Evangelist, the Baptist being the most

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<sup>1</sup> For Gower, the Evangelist would have been the author of the Gospel of John, the New Testament Epistles by John, and the Book of Revelation, although biblical scholars today understand the author of Revelation to have been a first century prophet active in Asia Minor. See Bernard McGinn, 'Introduction: John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 13.

depicted saint on rood screens in the combined areas of Devon and East Anglia in the fifteenth century and the Evangelist gaining prominence as caretaker of the Virgin.<sup>2</sup> As this chapter will reveal, the Baptist and the Evangelist were dear not only to the common people, but especially to royalty who considered them patron saints. Gower's ethos reflecting the Baptist and Evangelist embraces the concerns of the royal houses for which he wrote; for them he inveighs against ills in government; promises the coming of Christ; and after the fourteenth-century depredations of famine, plague, and war, praises the accession of Henry IV, Christ's ambassador.<sup>3</sup> In various poems, adopting the Baptist's hortatory *vox*, Gower seeks the Evangelist's direction in bringing a poem to its apocalyptic conclusion — for the individual sinner and for England.

A Johannine ethos had popular appeal and thus in itself contained a kind of pathos, soliciting responses that the faithful already associated with two important saints. It also reflected the scholastic identification of the modes of scriptural discourse such as the *modus praedicandi* (scripture in the manner of preaching) and *modus prophetarum* (scripture in the manner of the prophets). The identification of such *modi* pointed to the style of biblical composition meant to evoke specific kinds of emotion in the reader. Rita Copeland traces the biblical *modi* to Cicero's discussion on the legal analysis of acts in the *De inventione*,<sup>4</sup> which states that an act must be understood according to the manner (*modus*) in which it was committed, that the *modus* reflects the 'state of mind' of the actor.<sup>5</sup> According to Copeland, centuries of commentary on the *De inventione* by churchmen in the medieval West yielded a concept of the modes of discourse that

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- 2 Eamon Duffy, 'Holy maydens, holy wyfes: The Cult of the Women Saints in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> C England', *Studies in Church History*, 27 (1990), 175–96. A table concerning the frequency of depiction of virgin saints and martyrs shows the Baptist to be especially prominent in the art of Devon and East Anglia (p. 178). Duffy concentrates on women martyrs in this article, but the reasoning he offers for their popularity in women's cults could also be offered to explain the veneration of John the Baptist, who was admired as a model of virginity and brutally beheaded. Duffy writes, 'The violent juxtaposition of purity and defilement might seem to suggest a profound, if unacknowledged, ambivalence and tension about the relationship between holiness and sexuality in the minds of the married men and women who paid for the screens, and who proposed the saints on them to themselves as exemplars and intercessors' (p. 188). Duffy notes the importance of the relationship between the Virgin and St John the Evangelist and the intercessory power of both saints (pp. 186–87).
  - 3 On apocalypticism in Gower's age (and on Gower's apocalypticism) see John Aberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague, and Death in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2010). The entire book concerns the disasters listed, and pages 3–4 introduce apocalypticism in England and in Gower directly.
  - 4 Rita Copeland, 'The Ciceronian Rhetorical Tradition and Medieval Literary Theory', in *The Rhetoric of Cicero in its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition*, ed. by Virginia Cox and John Ward (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 239–65.
  - 5 Cicero, *De inventione*, 1.27.41 (quoted in Copeland, 'The Ciceronian Rhetorical Tradition', p. 261).



reflect both the speaker's (actor's) 'state of mind' and intentions for moving the audience through rhetorical strategies for form and language. Gower meant to imitate a variety of scriptural styles through which his Johannine narrator both conveys and induces feelings that can move the reader's will to moral correction, certainly a *modus praedicandi* inducing shame and repentance and a *modus prophetarum* ushering in dread and dismay. Gower's strategy to combine these modes in a single Johannine ethos was encouraged by a host of *artes praedicandi* equating preaching with prophecy, for instance Thomas of Chobham's insistence on speaking of *predicatio* and *prophetia* simultaneously.<sup>6</sup>

Gower's Johannine *personae* not only reproduce biblical compositional styles and locate his verse in an English apocalypse, but also explain, at least in part, two motifs prevalent in Gower's writings upon which many scholars have commented: incest (the Baptist is martyred for preaching against incest) and eyesight (the Evangelist was endowed with the eagle's spiritual sight). Several Gowerians, including myself, have advanced explanations for the poet's concentration on episodes of incest in the *Confessio Amantis*, and a few have discussed the genesis of evil through incest in the *Mirour*.<sup>7</sup> Throughout this book, it becomes clear how often and emphatically Gower projected, with the Baptist's voice, the topic of incest. While criticism has advanced nuanced readings of this phenomenon, realizing that incest is the final theme upon which the Baptist preached — he was decapitated for warning Herod against an illicit relationship — helps to explain why the incest theme dominates throughout Gower's corpus and especially in the final tale of the *Confessio Amantis*. The Baptist urged Herod Antipas against marriage with sister-in-law Herodias, and Gower sought to inhabit the Baptist's voice, articulating even the most taboo

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6 For more on Chobham's discussion of preaching and prophecy and for a survey of *artes praedicandi* combining these modes, see Nicolò Maldino, *In pro del mondo: Dante, la predicazione e i generi della letteratura religiosa medievale* (Rome: Salerno, 2017), pp. 48–81.

7 For analysis of the incest motif in the *Confessio Amantis*, see the following: Georgiana Donavin, *Incest Narratives and the Structure of Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Victoria, B.C.: ELS, 1993); Larry Scanlon, 'The Riddle of Incest: John Gower and the Problem of Medieval Sexuality', in *Re-Visioning Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Charlotte, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998), pp. 93–127; María Bullón-Fernández, *Fathers and Daughters in Gower's Confessio Amantis: Authority, Family, State, and Writing* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000); Georgiana Donavin, 'Taboo and Transgression in Gower's "Apollonius of Tyre"', in *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, ed. by Eve Salisbury, Georgiana Donavin, and Merrill Lewellyn Price (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), pp. 94–121; Sebastian Sobecki, 'Educating Richard: Incest, Marriage, and (Political) Consent in Gower's "Tale of Apollonius"', *Anglia*, 125 (2007), 2015–16. A recent analysis of the incest motif in the *Mirour* occurs in Kim Zarins, 'Intersex and the Pardoner's Body', *Accessus* 4.1 (2018): <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1030&context=accessus>>.

topics for the spiritual benefit of the audience.<sup>8</sup> The Baptist's relationship to Herod provides a paradigm for Gower's position in correcting various rulers, perhaps not for incestuousness, per se, but for the tyranny demonstrated by the tetrarch and evident in a perpetrator of incest. Speaking truth to power on issues as private as a ruler's sexuality, Gower incorporates into his literary voices two biblical saints who addressed corruption in their contemporary worlds. While the Baptist condemned Herod in terms like those with which Gower eventually disparaged Richard's rule, the Evangelist, too, confronted depravity in Roman government and defied Domitian's injunctions against preaching, having survived the emperor's attempt to kill him in a cauldron of oil for evangelizing in Asia.<sup>9</sup> In his reiteration of the Baptist's concerns, Gower seized upon incest as a metonym for corruption.

While incest is a topic from the Baptist's preaching that enables spiritual and political critique, eyesight is a precious gift granted to the Evangelist that connects to discussions of authority. Desirous of imitating the Evangelist's gifts, Gower muses often on the health and quality of his eyesight. In the opening lines of the Trentham Manuscript version of 'Quicquid homo scribat', Gower records that his vision failed during the first year of Henry IV's reign, but long before 1399 the poet's references to infirmity often include weak eyes.<sup>10</sup> For instance, already in the Prologue to Book 2 of the *Vox Clamantis*, composed around 1380, Gower claims to be an old man, whose 'eye is blind', and in the final verses of the *Confessio Amantis*, perhaps completed a decade before Henry acceded to the throne, the poet describes his aged 'yhen dimme'.<sup>11</sup> Whether such references are figurative depictions or advance warnings of later debility, Gower often correlated vision with authorial clarity. While the late-onset blindness described in 'Quicquid homo scribat' would be most distressing for a poet who aligned his narrative ethos with John the Evangelist, the eagle-eyed theologian who saw through heaven's veil and wrote the powerful images described in Revelation, Gower makes clear almost thirty years before his death that his 'sight' could not equal the saint's, even if his poetry invoked the Evangelist as a muse. A popular hymn attributed to Adam of St Victor describes the Evangelist as 'seeing the highest King's glory / With the sharp eye of the mind', a facility that Gower lamented being

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8 For theories of taboos and how they apply to Gower's CA, see Donavin, 'Taboo and Transgression', pp. 94–121.

9 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, 2nd edn. trans. by William Granger Ryan, intro. by Eamon Duffy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 51.

10 John Gower, 'Quicquid homo scribat' in *John Gower: The Minor Latin Works with In Praise of Peace*, ed. and trans. by R. F. Yeager (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), ll. 1–2: <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/yeager-gower-minor-latin-works-quicquid-homo-scribat>>.

11 VC Pro. Book 2, l. 53: *Est oculus cecus*; CA 8, l. 2826.

unable to achieve.<sup>12</sup> As Jonathan Hsy and Tory Vandeveter Pearman show in separate articles for the inaugural issue of the journal *Accessus* (focusing largely on disability studies), blindness and infirmity permeate Gower's self-fashioning, poetic craft, and reception.<sup>13</sup> Gower's Johannine narrators refer to the quality of sight as integral to a capacity for authorship, the many references to the poet's blindness constituting a singular kind of modesty topos. As we survey the construction of the Johannine narrator throughout Gower's poetry, we will find that the motif of incest dominates in the *Mirour de l'Omme*, that of eyesight in the *Vox Clamantis*, and a balanced presentation of the two in the *Confessio Amantis*.

Gower adapted a biblical ethos that is both dependent upon and subordinate to the two Saints John because, according to Robert R. Edwards, 'Preaching and prophecy offer Gower two important models of authorship.'<sup>14</sup> That Gower, after his death, was remembered as a preacher and prophet is evident in the Bedford Psalter-Hours containing ten portraits of the author in these roles, one of these portraits gracing the front cover of this book.<sup>15</sup> Many scholars have discussed the poet's appropriation of both modes: Maria Wickert observes the *Vox Clamantis*'s debt to the Baptist's sermon in Luke, Russell A. Peck elaborates on the centrality of Daniel to both the *Vox* and *Confessio*, Yoshiko Kobayshi finds *Lamentations* in

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- 12 See 'Felix sedes gratiae' in *The Liturgical Poetry of Adam of St Victor from the Text of Gautier*, ed. by Digby S. Wrangham, 3 vols (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1881) I: pp. 204–07. Although this edition supplies a lovely translation for singing, I supply my own more literal translation here.
- 13 For the work of Hsy and Pearman, as well as other discussions of the pertinence of disability studies to Gower's work, see the first issue of *Accessus*: <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/accessus/vol1/iss1/>>.
- 14 Robert R. Edwards, *Invention and Authorship in Medieval England* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2017), p. 71. Maura Nolan, in contrast to Edwards' assertion, argues that over time, Gower rejects the static prophet's voice that one finds in the main body of the VC. Gower's citations of Ovid undercut moralizing and rigidly hierarchical statements, Nolan contends. Further, according to Nolan, the Ovidian references return the poet to participation in the world (rather than dislocation from it as a distanced seer outside or above the world). See Maura Nolan, 'The Poetics of Catastrophe: Ovidian Allusion in Gower's *Vox Clamantis*', in *Medieval Latin and Middle English Literature: Essays in Honour of Jill Mann* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011), pp. 113–33. However, Nolan's perspective assumes that the prophet is not invested in the experience of the world and is a distanced figure always invoking divine hierarchies. In both the Bible and medieval traditions, John the Baptist and John the Evangelist addressed contemporary leaders and events when they were not conducting rituals or experiencing visions. The Baptist preached against the sins of his age and gave spiritual advice to Herod, while John the Evangelist was believed to have written three epistles concerning his interactions with the faithful.
- 15 The Bedford Psalter-Hours is contained in London, British Library, MS Additional 42131. For an interpretation of its portraits, see Sylvia Wright, 'The Author Portraits in the Bedford Psalter-Hours: Gower, Chaucer, and Hoccleve', *The British Library Journal*, 18.2 (1992), 190–201.

Gower's verse, and Linda Barney Burke hears the prophet Elijah there.<sup>16</sup> Edwards analyses Gower's preaching on the virtues in the *Mirour de l'Omme* and points out that all of the major prophets and many of the minor prophets are mentioned in the French masterpiece.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Gower preaches on the seven deadly sins through Genius's instructions to Amans and prophesies the peasants' rebellion when decrying the disloyalty of common workers in the *Vox*.<sup>18</sup> Overall, scholars agree with Wickert that Gower took on the obligation expressed in sermons, preaching manuals, and other religious discourses to point out sins and offer moral corrections and that he took on the voices of various prophets in order to express the mediated Word.<sup>19</sup> This chapter adds to previously published thought on Gower's preaching and prophecy by demonstrating how the two Saints John, and the relationship between them, are essential to Gower's poetry. As Gower addressed the ills of his time and looked ahead to Christ's redressing judgement, it was natural, I will argue, for the poet to speak in the voices of model preachers and prophets named John.

As we shall see in the next chapter and beyond, the Baptist and the Evangelist are joined in providing biblical rhetorical models for Gower's poems by a third and more persuasive member of the Holy Family who does not focus on sin and annihilation, but instead on what comes afterward to Christian believers: hope, joy, and loving reunion. This orator is the Virgin Mary, figured in Gower's virtuous female characters and in the *hortus- conclusus*-like structures of his poems. This chapter inaugurates a series of discussions interlinking the place of the two Saints John in Gower's poetry with the representation of the Virgin as an icon of Christian

16 Maria Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, trans. by Robert J. Meindl, 2nd edn (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2016), pp. 53–60; Russell A. Peck, 'John Gower and the Book of Daniel', in *John Gower: Recent Readings*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), pp. 159–88; Yoshiko Kobayashi, 'The Voice of an Exile: From Ovidian Lament to Prophecy in Book I of John Gower's *Vox Clamantis*', in *Through a Classical Eye: Transcultural and Transhistorical Visions in Medieval English, Italian, and Latin Literature in Honour of Winthrop Wetherbee*, ed. by Andrew Galloway and R. F. Yeager (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 339–62; Linda Barney Burke, '"The Voice of One Crying": John Gower, Christine de Pizan, and the Tradition of Elijah the Prophet', in *Gower in Contexts: Scribal, Linguistic, Literary and Socio-historical Readings*, ed. by Laura Filardo-Llamas, Brian Gastle, and Marta Gutiérrez Rodríguez, special issue of *ES Revista de Filología Inglesa*, 33.1 (Valladolid: Publications of the University of Valladolid, 2012), 117–35. Burke argues that an Elijah-like speaker surfaces in Gower's *vox clamantis*. Jesus said, 'And if you are willing to receive it, [John the Baptist] is *Elijah* who is to come' (Matthew 11.14).

17 Edwards, *Invention and Authorship*, p. 72.

18 In VC, Book 5, Chapter 10, ll. 653–54, Gower prophesies the outcome of the struggles between the classes: *Hiiis, nisi iusticia fuerit terrore parata, / Succumbent domini tempore credo breui* (Unless dire justice is meted out to them, / I think the lords will yield to them shortly). Trans. Robert J. Meindl, *The Gower Project Translation Wiki*, <<http://gowertranslation.pbworks.com/w/page/53715438/Vox%20Clamantis%20Translations>>.

19 Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, pp. 74–98.

rhetoric. Chapter Three investigates medieval theories and practices of Marian rhetoric that eventually supplant the Johannine voices in Gower's verse, and Chapter Six explains how and why Gower's poems are enclosed with Marian verses or appeals to the Virgin. This chapter privileges the construction of Gower's Johannine narrators, although it cannot do so without reference to the infant Baptist's response to the Virgin's voice or the Evangelist's commission from Jesus to care for Mary after the crucifixion. These Marian connections allow the two Saints John special intimacy with and insight into the Word, a nearness to God's purpose that Gower desires for his own poetic aims. The New Testament saints — the Baptist, Evangelist, and Virgin, who are close to Jesus in both blood and spirit — advance Christ's message as their voices merge with Gower's narrators or surface in one of his many fictional characters.

After speaking earnestly through both Saints John in the *Mirour* and the *Vox*, however, Gower makes an aborted attempt to do so again in the *Confessio's* Prologue. As the opening to Book 1 of the Middle English poem laments, not even the urgent voices of the Saints John have enabled Gower to help turn England's sinful tide. A decade later when 'John' echoes the New Testament prophets and preachers for the last time in the *Cronica Tripertita*, their combined voices merely support the successful Lancastrian revolution that, as Gower underscores, was foreordained by Christ. The Baptist and Evangelist are ever only harbingers of a First or Second Coming; they clear the way for Christ, whose Word made incarnate through the Virgin Mary will finally establish the heavenly kingdom. Therefore, although Gower's Johannine ethos can offer instruction to Richard II and eventually pave a way for Henry IV, Christ's anointed, Gower must turn in the end to the feminine invention of holy discourse for England's healing and personal pathways to salvation. In doing so, Gower's Johannine narrators realize the Baptist's prophecy concerning himself in John 3. 30: that the Word must increase while his own reputation and role decreases. Gower's Johannine *personae* might warn of apocalyptic events and the wages of sin, but the Virgin's conveyance of the Word makes redemption possible and brings humanity closer to heavenly bliss. As a strategy for expressing patriotism, critiquing ineffective governments, creating an apocalyptic atmosphere, foregrounding spiritual issues, and mirroring the sorrow with which his audience ought to respond to contemporary trials, Gower resorts to a Johannine ethos until the limits of that rhetoric are exposed.

## 'John' Speaking

Not least important for Gower's investment in the voices of the Baptist and Evangelist is the fact of the shared first name John. Eve Salisbury points out

that Gower assumes 'the prophetic mantle' suggested by his first name and 'underwritten by the divine'.<sup>20</sup> *Nomen est omen*. As Emily Steiner asserts, 'Medieval writers transformed naming into a distinctive poetics', and in this chapter, we shall see how the name 'John' governs Gower's biblical ethos, adherence to the Holy Family, and apocalyptic rhetoric.<sup>21</sup>

This first name resonated in a number of ways. On the one hand, after the twelfth century Jehan or John was one of the most common names in Paris and London, respectively, and might be used less piously as an appellation for 'everyman'. In *Piers Plowman*, for instance, judges and jurors are accused of doing more for 'Iohan' (any man) than for God.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, through the exemplars of the Baptist, Evangelist, and other saints, 'John' held special meaning.<sup>23</sup> As Salisbury remarks, 'For Gower names should capture the essence of that which is signified if they are to signify truthfully'<sup>24</sup> — and the name John signifies 'grace'. This meaning was made clear in many sources, including saints' lives, sermons, and hymns.<sup>25</sup> We

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- 20 Eve Salisbury, 'Violence and the Sacrificial Poet: Gower, the *Vox*, and the Critics', in *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), p. 138.
- 21 Emily Steiner, 'Naming and Allegory in Late Medieval England', in *Master Narratives of the Middle Ages*, a special issue of *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 6.2 (April 2007): 257.
- 22 William Langland, *Piers Plowman* B-text, 7.44, in *Piers Plowman Electronic Archive* <<http://piers.chass.ncsu.edu/texts/Bx>>.
- 23 From the twelfth century forward, John was one of the most common names in London. Derived from the Latin *Johannis* and the French *Jehan*, an Englishman named John might from the thirteenth century be called by the pet name Jack. See Tauno F. Mustanoja, 'The Suggestive Use of Christian Names in Middle English Poetry', in *Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley*, ed. by Jerome Mandel and Bruce Rosenberg (Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. 54. Unlike Chaucer, however, Gower did not poke fun at himself in his verse, through reference to a pet name or otherwise. 'Jacke' is another person, imprudent in his generosity to his friends and of a lower class than the poet in CA 5, ll. 7747–56. Gower's most memorable use of pet names is in the list of peasants in the VA, where he refers to 'Jacke' again, this time as a rebel. There, Gower deploys many other hypocoristic forms such as 'Hobb' for 'Robert' (VA, ll. 783–94). In this passage Middle English pet names like Bette and Gibbe pop in the Latin ('Betteque Gibbe', l. 784). The narrator claims to know the rebels by these names, indicating familiarity with them and the perversity of using endearments in the horrific context of the Uprising (l. 795). See Mustanoja, 'The Suggestive Use', p. 57.
- 24 Eve Salisbury, 'Remembering Origins: Gower's Monstrous Body Poetic' in *Re-Visioning Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998), p. 173. In addition, of Gower's discussion of Trojan names in the VA, Maria Wickert writes: 'Names have a fateful significance for medieval man; history can repeat itself'. See Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, p. 34.
- 25 Saints' lives, sermons, and hymns taught medieval people the meaning of the name 'John'. For instance, the *Legenda aurea* declares, 'John's name is said to mean "grace of God" or "one to whom a gift is given"'. See de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, p. 50. In addition, Robert Rypon's sermon collection, now British Library, MS Harley 4894, includes a sermon on John the Baptist at 172<sup>v</sup>–74<sup>v</sup>, entitled 'Erat Johannes'. The Prologue

have already observed how St John's Gospel, font of Gower's rhetorical philosophy on the Word and the truth, emphasizes Christ's incarnation that prophets and teachers received 'grace upon grace'.<sup>26</sup> In both Saints John and in the Virgin Mary (*gratia plena* according to the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation and in the oft-spoken rosary prayer), Gower identified biblical orators who were uniquely touched by grace and endowed by the Word with divine linguistic gifts.<sup>27</sup> Speaking frequently through the voice of the Baptist or according to the teachings, experiences, and allegories of the Evangelist, Gower seeks to realize the rhetorical potential of 'John' through the inspiration of divine grace. As Gower comments before narrating the life of the Virgin in the *Mirour de l'Omme*, he has written many lines seeking 'grace' and 'succour'.<sup>28</sup>

That Gower was interested in verbal play involving his name and committed to the moral writing suggested by it is evident in the Prologue to the *Visio Anglie*. There, he offers a riddle for those who would like to identify the author and invokes the Evangelist in the following verse: 'May he whose Revelations Patmos nursed, / Whose name I bear, give guidance to this work'.<sup>29</sup> In these lines, Gower entreats his namesake the

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to this sermon contains a gloss reminding the preacher to spell out the meaning of the Baptist's first name: 'Johannes interpretatur gracia' ('John' is interpreted to mean 'grace') (172'). For an edition of this sermon, see Holly Johnson, ed. *Robert Rypon: Selected Sermons: Feast Days and Saints' Days*, 2 vols (Louvain: Peters, 2019), I, pp. 196–213. In addition, the title of a well-known hymn celebrating John the Evangelist begins with the line 'Felix sedes gracia' (Happy seat of John [or grace]). Concerning contexts for this hymn and a loose translation, see Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *St John the Divine: The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 63. An edition of the hymn, which is sometimes attributed to Adam of St Victor, exists in *The Liturgical Poetry of Adam of St Victor*, I, pp. 204–07.

26 John 1.16. See T. Matthew N. McCabe, *Gower's Vulgar Tongue: Ovid, Lay Religion, and English Poetry in the Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011) for extended discussions of the importance of grace to the CA (especially pp. 170–89, 223–25).

27 See Mary's Annunciation in Luke 1.28. Although 'Ave Maria gratia plena' was the core of the rosary prayer, the words to this popular devotion evolved throughout the Middle Ages. See Anne Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

28 MO, I, 27306: *grace, socour*.

29 The riddle whose answer is 'John Gower' is in VA, Pro., ll. 19–24: *Scribentis, nomen si queras, ecce loquela / Sub tribus implicita versibus inde latet. / Primos sume pedes Godefridi desque Iohanni, / Principiumque sue Wallia iunquat eis: / Ter caput amittens det cetera membra, que tali / Carmine compositi nominis ordo patet*. For a study of sounds and meaning in the riddle see Stephanie L. Batkie, 'The Sound of my Voice: Auralty and Credible Faith in the *Vox Clamantis*', in *John Gower: Others and the Self*, ed. by Russell A. Peck and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), p. 40. The quotation on John of Patmos is in VA, Pro., ll. 57–58. The Latin verse states: *Insula quem Pathmos suscepit in Apocalipsi — / Huius ergo nomen gesto — gubernat opus*. All translations from the VA will be A. G. Rigg's. See David R. Carlson, ed., *John Gower: Poems on Contemporary Events*, trans. by A. G. Rigg (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2011), pp. 23–246.

Evangelist, who was believed to be exiled in Patmos before receiving the visions of Revelation, to guide the composition of the *Visio Anglie* and by implication the entire *Vox Clamantis* to which the *Visio* has been affixed as an introduction.<sup>30</sup> In this way, Gower inhabits John the Baptist's voice crying in the desert under the direction of John the Evangelist's authorial vision, a symbiotic relationship between the two Saints John that operates in the *Mirour de l'Omme*, *Vox Clamantis*, *Cronica Tripertita*, and Prologue to the *Confessio Amantis* and that allows the Baptist's clamouring against evil to be harnessed by the rhetorical and scribal expertise of the Evangelist.

While both Saints John demonstrate a holy literacy by remastering prophets whom they would have encountered in Hebraic scripture, the Baptist and the Evangelist do not have equal standing in Gower's poems as 'textual' exemplars.<sup>31</sup> Gower admired them for articulating the words of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Elijah in new messianic contexts (just as he admired medieval authors who refashioned canonical texts and challenged himself to do so), but he acknowledged that grace had imbued John the

30 For the process of composition of the *Vox Clamantis*, to which the *Visio Anglie* was affixed as 'Book I', see Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, pp. 3–20. See also David R. Carlson, Introduction, *John Gower: Poems on Contemporary Events*, trans. by A. G. Rigg (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2011), pp. 7–8.

31 John the Baptist and John the Evangelist rework the testimony of ancient Hebrew prophets in their own preaching and prophecy. Jesus calls the Baptist the new Elijah in Matthew 11. 14. The Baptist repeats and fulfils the words of Isaiah 40. 3: 'A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God"'. A Nazarene who retreats to the wilderness for an ascetic existence and to the Jordan's banks for baptizing, the Baptist prepares the Hebrews for the messiah whom Isaiah promised. Also recalling Isaiah, the Evangelist's descriptions of God in his heavenly glory compare to the ancient prophet's vision of 'the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated' (Isaiah 6. 1). See Hamburger, *St John the Divine*, p. 56. As for the Evangelist's connections to the Hebrew prophets, the Evangelist has become the new eagle of Ezekiel, with penetrating eyesight and the ability to fly up into the heavens. More interested than the Baptist in inspiring awe in heavenly visions, the Evangelist also turns to Daniel's apocalyptic description of the glorious coming of the 'Son of Man' before the 'Ancient of Days'; in the words of the Evangelist, 'Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen' (Daniel 7. 13–14; Revelation 1. 7). In Revelation, the Evangelist shares with Daniel a tone of impending doom and allegorical visions prophesying the Son of Man's judgement. Speaking as 'John', Gower takes this tone when describing an episode from Daniel: Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue representing the different ages and civilizations in both the *Vox Clamantis* and *Confessio Amantis*. On the importance of the Book of Daniel to Gower, see Peck, 'John Gower and the Book of Daniel', pp. 159–88. Among the Old Testament prophet's visions, the Evangelist recommissions the 'four great beasts' of Daniel 1. 3 to create an 'army of beasts', expanding greatly on a terrifying allegory and suggesting Gower's horrific transformation of the peasants into violent animals in the *Visio Anglie*. The Army of Beasts occurs at Revelation 9. 17–21. Reprising Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, the Baptist and Evangelist draw forward the messianic and apocalyptic prophecies of Old Testament scripture and in so doing, help the faithful of their own time to imagine the efficacy of those ancient words and the ways that they foretell the future.



Baptist and John the Evangelist with different discursive gifts.<sup>32</sup> The Baptist is an orator, while the Evangelist is an author.<sup>33</sup> For Gower this meant that the strident call to repentance by the one could be recorded and directed by the compositional mastery of the other. Indeed, the Baptist, who did not provide written testimony of his own, preached and prophesied in words recorded and directed by all the gospel writers, but it was only John, the beloved disciple, who wrote that the Baptist self-identified as the *vox clamantis*, humbly and extensively distinguished himself from the Christ, and foresaw that Jesus is the Lamb of God, all *reportationes* of the Baptist's witness that deeply appealed to Gower and perhaps convinced the fourteenth-century poet to adapt a narrator named 'John'.

Along with Luke's coverage of the Baptist's place in the Holy Family and expanded life story, it is the Gospel of John from which Gower mostly draws his narrators' biblical ethos. In this way, the Evangelist functions as an authorial guide to the Baptist as preacher and prophet. In John 1. 23, the Baptist announces: 'I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord", as Isaiah the prophet said'. In contrast,

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- 32 Creating Johannine narrators in fourteenth-century poetry, Gower similarly adapts ancient prophecy to the expectations of his own age. His efforts to build a biblical ethos into his rhetorical theory parallel his statements about inventing edifying and innovative texts out of the exemplars of the sages of old. As Gower famously says in the opening lines (Pro. 1–11) of the *Confessio Amantis* about the reception of ancient texts, whether by his saintly namesakes or by himself:

Of hem that writen ous tofore  
The bokes duelle, and we therefore  
Ben tawht of that was write tho:  
Forthi good is that we also  
In oure tyme among ous hier  
Do wryte of newe som matiere,  
Essampled of these olde wyse,  
So that it myhte in such a wyse,  
Whan we ben dede and elleswhere,  
Beleve to the worldes eere  
In tyme comende after this.

Gower also captures this sentiment in the Prologue to the *Visio Anglie* when he writes: *Scripture veteris capiunt exempla future / Nam dabit experta res magis esse fidem* (Of ancient books those yet to come take heed, / For thing experienced commands belief) (ll. 1–2). Among the many voices of masculine authority that Gower might have picked from the Bible to adapt and leave behind for the 'world's ear', those of the two Saints John are especially fitting, not only because they bear the poet's name, but also because of the ways that they mediate the texts of the prophets before them to command belief — to inspire spiritual preparation and transformation before an *adventus* of the deity.

- 33 Russell A. Peck emphasizes the '*written voice* — the voice of writings dictated by a divine presence, with hidden meanings to be pondered' of Gower's apocalyptic models. See Peck, 'John Gower and the Book of Daniel', p. 163. On the textuality of apocalyptic prophets, see Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Wisdom and the Apocalyptic', in *Religious Syncretisms in Antiquity*, ed. by Birger A. Pearson (Missoula, MT: University of Montana Press, 1975), p. 154.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not offer the Baptist's first-person commentary on his own fulfilment of Isaiah, but instead merely mention the passage from the Old Testament prophet as a model for the Baptist. John's gospel showed Gower how to create an autobiographical narrator with the Baptist's *vox*. That fifteenth-century readers associated Gower with the Baptist's self-identification in John's gospel is evident in the portrait of Gower from the Bedford Psalter-Hours on this book's cover; at Psalm 141/142 Gower's uplifted countenance appears amidst the initial 'V' in the line 'Voce mea domine clamavi' [With my voice I cried to the Lord].<sup>34</sup> In addition, the Gospel of John showed Gower how to most clearly construct the Baptist's role, since this gospel is the most discriminating concerning the Baptist's spiritual status. There the Baptist insists multiple times that he is 'not the Christ' and engages in extended conversations in which he disavows being a resurrected prophet of old.<sup>35</sup> Like the Baptist of John's gospel, Gower's hortatory narrators are careful not to present themselves as the ultimate source of the Word; a dream, a vision from God, the voice of an angel, the prompting of the people, or an allusion in an ancient text always mediates the rhetoric of Gower's Baptist-like speakers. As John 1. 8 asserts about the Baptist: 'He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light'.

Many scholars have commented on one mediating factor in Gower's Johannine rhetoric, the adoption of a *vox populi* along with a *vox clamantis*, a doubly complicated narrative voice in which the preacher claims to hear about society's faults through the voice of the people.<sup>36</sup> Edwards argues that Gower's reliance on the *vox populi* introduces a 'more ambivalent form of authorship' into the certain utterances of prophet and preacher' and 'a simultaneous assertion and disavowal of prophetic authorship in the public sphere.'<sup>37</sup> Along with references to blindness, this strategy constitutes a Gowerian version of the modesty topos, in which, like the Baptist

34 London, British Library, MS Additional 42131. See Sylvia Wright, 'The Author Portraits,' pp. 190–93.

35 John 1. 20, 3. 28. See also John 1. 8 and the entire passages of John 19–23, 1. 29–34, and 3. 27–30.

36 Maria Wickert demonstrates that Gower relies on many of the Catholic homilist's strategies for presenting his Baptist-like narrator as a mediating speaker. She looks to the VC's two original prologues (for Books 2 and 3) and to the epilogue (book VC 7, l. 25) to analyse Gower's use of the four *causae*, (material, efficient, final, formal) so often recommended in the arts of preaching tradition. See Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, pp. 74–98. A. J. Minnis extends Wickert's argument by discussing the complications that occur when Gower makes use of all four *causae*. If God is the 'final cause' of the preaching of 'John', then the other causes such as the 'vox populi' mediate the holy directives. See A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Scolar Press, 1984), pp. 173–74.

37 Edwards, *Invention and Authorship*, pp. 72–73. According to Edwards, the *vox populi* derives from Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 3.56.7; Cicero, 'De prouinciis consularibus oratio', 2.4, and Lucan

as constructed by the Gospel of John, the poet acknowledges that he is certainly not a reincarnation of the scriptural speaker or a fully endowed bearer of the Word, but requires the affirmation of the people for the content of his preaching and prophecy.<sup>38</sup> By invoking the Evangelist, supreme theologian of the Word, however, Gower hopes to present a Baptist-figure who is in part a prologue to the gospel writer's Christology.<sup>39</sup> Finally, the Gospel of John alone contains a scene in which the Baptist calls out to Jesus: 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'<sup>40</sup> In this way, the Evangelist constructs a Baptist-figure who not only prophesies the first coming of the Messiah, but also foresees Christ's sacrifice and eschatological role. The Baptist's foreknowledge of the bleeding Lamb on his eternal throne compares to the apocalyptic vision believed to have been granted to the Evangelist. Like the author of John's gospel and presumably of Revelation, the Baptist conceives the sweep of history, from the ancient Hebrew prophets to the end of days and eternity. With the Evangelist's help, Gower delivers this historically aware *vox* and thus addresses England's place in providence.

Gower's reliance on a Johannine ethos in which a penitential preacher speaks under the guidance of a master theologian, historian, pastor, and prophet is as unique in fourteenth-century literature as it was in the Gospel of John.<sup>41</sup> This is an important observation for an assessment of Gower's Johannine rhetoric, but it must be said that no matter how unusual Gower's treatment of the two Saints John, the Baptist and the Evangelist were often considered together in hagiography, devotions, and art. As Jeffrey A. Hamburger comments, 'The opening chapter of John's Gospel [witnessing to the Baptist's faith] ensured the two St Johns an enduring place in Christian iconography. Like Castor and Pollux, the Baptist and the Evangelist proved inseparable.'<sup>42</sup> Hamburger continues: 'The relationship between the two Johns was defined in terms of contrast and complementarity', one continuing from the Hebrew prophets, the other prophesying post-scriptural events, and together creating 'continuity between the two Testaments, but [...] also a caesura [...].'<sup>43</sup> Claire

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*Pharsalia*, 1.268. Edwards notes references to the *vox populi* in MO at 10309–20, 12725–26, 18446–48, and elsewhere.

38 For more on the modesty topos in Gower, see Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, p. 78.

39 According to Jeffrey A. Hamburger, the author of the Gospel of John was 'the first and foremost theologian of the Incarnation and the Trinity'. See Hamburger, *St John the Divine*, p. 18.

40 John 1. 36.

41 Russell A. Peck notes that Gower was also alone in his extended treatment of the prophet Daniel, who, as we have just discussed, is connected to the Evangelist. See Peck, 'John Gower and the Book of Daniel', pp. 163–67.

42 Hamburger, *St John the Divine*, p. 65. On the practice of bringing the two Saints John together, see Christian Heck, 'Rapprochement, antagonism ou confusion dans le culte des saints: Art et devotion à Katharinenthal au quatorzième siècle', *Viator*, 21 (1990), 229–38.

43 Hamburger, *St John the Divine*, p. 65.

Waters, in the Introduction to her edition of Cambridge, St John's College, MS N.16, a manuscript containing juxtaposed Middle English lives of the Saints John, notes that the deep connections between the two preachers and prophets sparked a 'competitiveness that sometimes overtook the two saints' devotees [...]'.<sup>44</sup> The *Legenda aurea*, for instance, records a dispute between two learned theologians in which each had planned to defend one of the Saints John, but the Baptist and Evangelist appeared, each to his own advocate, to say that they are friends in heaven and disapprove of such discord on earth.<sup>45</sup> Waters observes that the Evangelist 'was a natural companion to the Baptist, with whom he shares a long iconographic history, [both having] connections to English kingship'.<sup>46</sup> Gower's response to disputes over the saints' superiority is to collapse the two into a single biblical ethos binding their common characteristics and allowing their differences (orator versus author, forerunner versus beloved companion, ascetic preacher versus visionary) to function in tandem as a sign of English unity amidst the disasters of French wars, parliamentary politics, and more.

In fact, Gower's crafting of a biblical ethos containing elements of both Saints John is not only a harmonic strategy for cacophonous times, but also an acknowledgement of saints deeply connected to English patronage. Gower deploys the voice of John to move Richard, the Baptist's devotee, to accept reasonable counsel. Richard II especially venerated the Baptist, and he honoured his ancestor's association with the Evangelist.<sup>47</sup> Richard's commemorative dates aligned with liturgical celebrations for both the Baptist and Evangelist: he was born on 6 January 1367 on the feast of

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44 Claire M. Waters, Introduction, in *Virgins and Scholars: A Fifteenth-Century Compilation of the Lives of John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Jerome, and Katherine of Alexandria*, ed. by Claire M. Waters (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), p. 23. Waters demonstrates the Briggittine influence of the hagiographical narratives that she has edited and posits that competition between the Saints John, invented by their devotees, was more intense on the Continent than in England (p. 27). The Prologue to the lives of the Saints John in Waters' edition attempts to allay this competitive spirit: it notes that some 'folke have special deuotion to these two sayntes' and that this devotion to men who had a special devotion to Our Lord is 'worthy'. An argument is made not to prefer one over the other, but to love them both. See Cambridge, St John's College, MS N.16, fol. 1. Although Gower would probably not have known the Briggittine lives of the Saints John, other extant hagiographical narratives include de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, p. 2, and Richard Newhauser and W. E. Bolton, 'A Hybrid Life of John the Baptist: The Middle English Text of MS Harley 2250', *Anglia*, 2 (2012), 218–39. The latter life represents a variation of the South English Legendary text in which both major feasts of the Baptist's life are accommodated in one story.

45 de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, p. 335.

46 Waters, Introduction, p. 20.

47 For a discussion of how Richard II's affiliation with both the Baptist and the Evangelist influences fourteenth-century literature (as exemplified by the *Pearl*), see John M. Bowers, *The Politics of Pearl: Court Poetry in the Age of Richard II* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001), pp. 85–87.

the Baptism of Christ, and he was crowned on 22 June 1377, on the eve of both the Baptist's Nativity and the Evangelist's Martyrdom.<sup>48</sup> However, it was the Baptist to whom he was devoted in both life and death. The monarch collected the Baptist's relics, including the dish on which the saint's severed head had been brought to Herod's court and one of the saint's teeth. Richard sponsored material arts representing the Baptist: E. W. Tristram has demonstrated an increase in mural art depicting the Baptist during the fourteenth century, and one such mural commissioned directly by Richard's court is in the Tower of London's Byward Tower, where the Baptist holds a book (scriptures) on which lies the Lamb of God.<sup>49</sup> Often linked to his patron saint, Richard is shown kneeling to John the Baptist in a stained-glass window in Winchester College chapel (c. 1390).<sup>50</sup> When in 1392 the City of London staged a conciliatory procession for Richard after conflicts concerning a loan payment, the organizers, according to Richard Maidstone, staged a scene at Temple Bar of John the Baptist gesturing toward the Lamb of God, in this case, figured in Richard.<sup>51</sup> The king's devotion to the Baptist and faith in the baptism represented by both Saints John is evident in the inscription on his tomb: 'O clemens Christe — cui devotus fuit iste; Votis Baptiste — salves quem pretulit iste' (O clement Christ, to whom this entombed king was devoted, by means of the Baptist's prayers, save him whom the Baptist anticipated / presented). Here, Richard's burial inscription links salvation and baptism, especially John the forerunner's baptism of Christ in the Jordan. The ambiguous verb 'pretulit' might mean that the Baptist preceded Richard's era and anticipated the king's devotion, or it could point, as Nigel Saul suspects, to the Wilton Diptych, the king's private altarpiece featuring the presentation of Richard II and the banner of England to the Virgin and Christ child by the Baptist and other English saints.<sup>52</sup> Like Richard, Gower identified with the Baptist. The poet's funding of his own burial monument

<sup>48</sup> In order to celebrate the Baptist's Nativity separately from the Evangelist's Martyrdom, the Roman Catholic Church positioned the Feast of St John the Evangelist on the third day after Christmas.

<sup>49</sup> E. W. Tristram, *English Wall Painting of the Fourteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), pp. 26, 193–94.

<sup>50</sup> Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 309.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Maidstone, *Concordia Facta inter Regum Riccardum II et Civitatem Londonie per Fratrem Riccardum Maydiston*, ed. by Charles Roger Smith (unpublished doctoral thesis, Princeton University, 1972), pp. 206–07. A. G. Rigg argues that Maidstone was likely a pageant organizer, given the detail with which he reports processions. See A. G. Rigg, 'Anglo-Latin in the Ricardian Age', in *Essays on Ricardian Literature in Honour of J. A. Burrow*, ed. by A. J. Minnis, Charlotte Morse, and Thorlac Turville-Petre (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) p. 132.

<sup>52</sup> Saul, *Richard II*, p. 309. On the importance of the Wilton Diptych to Richard II's court and Ricardian literature, see Bowers, *The Politics of Pearl*, pp. 87–108.

in St John the Baptist's Chapel in what is now Southwark Cathedral shows the poet's deep connection to the forerunner named John.<sup>53</sup>

Late medieval English courts also venerated the Evangelist as patron saint of Edward the Confessor, last of the Anglo-Saxon kings. Saints' lives tell of how St John tested the Confessor and performed a miracle as a sign of the king's goodness. According to the story, Edward, who would not deny anyone begging in the name of the Evangelist, one day met St John disguised as a beggar asking for alms in the Evangelist's name. The Confessor, not having any money, gave the poor man a ring, which St John kept for many years and then returned to the Confessor by way of two pilgrims returning from Jerusalem.<sup>54</sup> Through this legend the Evangelist established the sanctity of the native English monarchical line. In Gower's age, Richard acknowledged the Evangelist's proof of the Confessor's holiness, and Henry IV often featured the Evangelist's emblem (the eagle) to represent sovereignty, as can be seen on the king's tomb in Canterbury Cathedral and in Gower's 'H. aquile pullus' (Henry, Son of the Eagle). For Henry, eagle imagery intersected with devotion to Thomas Becket, who legendarily supplied coronation oil to Henry's line in a golden vial shaped like an eagle.<sup>55</sup> Just as the Evangelist had the privilege of viewing Christ enthroned, so Gower celebrated Henry's accession through many references to the Evangelist's majestic bird.

The Wilton Diptych expresses the importance of both the Baptist and the Evangelist to the Ricardian court.<sup>56</sup> On the Wilton Diptych's left inner panel not only John the Baptist, but also Edward the Confessor, holding the ring miraculously returned to him by the Evangelist, and Edmund the Martyr stand in support of Richard. Among pre-Conquest English saints, Richard was particularly devoted to St Edmund, East Anglian king who was martyred by the Danes about 870. On the right inner panel, the Blessed Virgin sits enthroned with eleven angels surrounding her, eleven being the age of Richard's succession, and the infant Jesus in her lap.<sup>57</sup> The

53 Gower is buried in St John the Baptist chapel and bequeathed a missal for use by others at the chapel's altar, as well as a chantry for the continued prayers for his soul. During Gower's lifetime, the chapel was located next to the north transept of the priory church.

54 Claire M. Waters, ed., 'The Life of St John the Evangelist', in *Virgins and Scholars: A Fifteenth-Century Compilation of the Lives of John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Jerome, and Katherine of Alexandria* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), ll. 769–78. While these lives were most probably composed after Gower's death in 1408, they synthesize long running traditions concerning the two saints.

55 Christopher Wilson, 'The Tomb of Henry IV and the Holy Oil of St Thomas of Canterbury', in *Medieval Architecture and its Intellectual Context*, ed. by Eric Fernie and Paul Crossley (London: The Hambledon Press, 1990), pp. 186–89.

56 The Wilton Diptych is viewable on the website of London's National Gallery: <<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/english-or-french-the-wilton-diptych>>.

57 A painting of St George presenting Richard II to the Virgin that once existed in a college in Rome, but is now lost, helps to explain the diptych. An inscription at the bottom of it

regal imagery surrounding both Richard and the Virgin implies that Mary's rule is concordant with the young king's. In addition, it shows that the diptych's representations of the Baptist and the Evangelist serve to support Richard's Marian piety, just as the Baptist and Evangelist support but cannot equal what we will come to recognize as Gower's Marian rhetoric. All the figures and actions displayed on the diptych suggest that the Holy Family and Royal family are aligned in their loyalty to Britain. Gower makes this point in the *Mirour de l'Omme*, which (although composed before the creation of the diptych) contends that the Holy Family is the source of all authority and opponent of every evil manifested in England.

On the diptych the Christ child leans forward to bless a flag of St George that Richard has presented for consecration and that an angel hoists within the holy child's reach.<sup>58</sup> In addition to the standard of St George, well-used in England since Edward III introduced the Order of the Garter, the presence of Edmund the Martyr, earlier venerated as patron saint of England, ensures that all saints and saintly kings representative of England stand as sponsors of the young king Richard. Edmund bears the arrow with which he was martyred and through which Gower, often depicted as an archer, slays the sins of the estates. To complete Richard's sacred sponsorship, an image of a globe surrounded by water with a boat crossing it appears above the red-cross flag of St George.<sup>59</sup> This globe represents England, but it also mirrors depictions of John the Evangelist's sea journey into exile on Patmos, often illustrated in English Apocalypse books or at the beginning of the Gospel of John. The Evangelist is associated with England's patronage not only through his relationship with Edward the Confessor and the miracle of the ring, but also through dragon imagery shared with St George, dragon slayer. In Revelation 12. 9, 'the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with

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apparently read: *Dos tua, Virgo pia / Haec est, quare rege, Maria* (This is your dowry, Blessed Virgin Mary, over which may you rule). See Dillian Gordon, 'A New Discovery in the Wilton Diptych', *Burlington Magazine*, 134 (1992), pp. 662–67.

<sup>58</sup> The depiction of St George's flag on the diptych has long encouraged an interpretation relating this altarpiece to crusading. See Maurice Keen, 'The Wilton Diptych: The Case for a Crusading Context' in *The Regal Image of Richard II and the Wilton Diptych*, ed. by Dillian Gordon, Lisa Monnas, and Caroline Elam (London: Harvey Miller, 1997), pp. 189–96. Nigel Morgan, however, argues that the diptych was painted after the failed western crusade at Nicopolis (1396) and that the altarpiece was meant for private devotion, two facts that would obviate the Wilton Diptych's association to crusading. See Nigel Morgan, 'The Significance of the Banner in the Wilton Diptych', in *The Regal Image of Richard II and the Wilton Diptych*, ed. by Dillian Gordon, Lisa Monnas, and Caroline Elam (London: Harvey Miller, 1997), pp. 179–88.

<sup>59</sup> On the image of a globe surrounded by water that could be seen on the Wilton Diptych after the 1992 cleaning, see Gordon, 'A New Discovery', pp. 662–67.

him'. The Evangelist's vision, hagiography concerning St George, Arthurian sagas, and the Golden Dragon standard that was also borne in Britain demonstrate that dragon-bearing and dragon-slaying are the brave Briton's response to apocalyptic threat.<sup>60</sup> Gower, like the Wilton Diptych, supports the English monarchy in addressing that threat in the voice of 'John'.

### **All in the Holy Family: Two Johns and the Virgin in the *Mirour de l'Omme***

During the reign of Richard's grandfather, Edward III, Gower wrote a French masterpiece aligning the voice of 'John' and all moral endeavour with the Holy Family. Little is known about the specific readership for which the *Mirour de l'Omme* was intended; it presents an allegory on the genesis of sin, a psychomachia of opposing vices and virtues, a repudiation of wickedness in the world, and an antidote to iniquity in the Virgin Mary, with whose nearly completed life story the poem suddenly ends. These moral verses, focusing on salvation history from God's creation to the present, is particularly relevant, 'John' claims, in the time of the Antichrist. To encourage the audience of the *Mirour de l'Omme* to embrace virtue and combat apocalyptic threats, Gower speaks in the sermonic voice of the Baptist, who points out the many sins arising from incest, and structures the narrative according to the theology, visions, and experience of the Evangelist, whom he cites as the poem's first authority. In the *Mirour* 'John' inveighs against the incestuous practices of the Devil and his progeny, through whom sin waxes and multiplies,<sup>61</sup> and he implores 'Jehan l'apostre evangelist' for a sighting of redemption.<sup>62</sup> Gower echoes the gospel of 'Jehan' by beginning his own poem with the world's creation and ending it with the holy one who bore her creator, the Virgin Mary. While the Baptist-like preaching in the *Mirour* exposes corruption, the Evangelist's supervision points to the Apocalypse and finally leads the narrator and the audience into an intimacy with the Virgin Mary, through whose mediation salvation is possible. By revealing humankind's degradation resulting from devilish lust and threatening God's vengeance, 'John' inspires terror and the desire for spiritual transformation; by presenting the Virgin as a merciful and healing mother, he offers hope. Fear and the expectation of release from it, created by Gower's Johannine ethos, give the readers powerful

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60 On the history of the banners used for England, the Golden Dragon since Anglo-Saxon times, and the red cross of St George that gained popularity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Morgan, 'The Signification of the Banner', pp. 182–83.

61 MO, ll. 205–10032.

62 MO, l. 49.



motivations to prune wicked excess and cling to the vine of eternal life, cultivated by the Virgin Mother.

Motivational speakers and muses, the Baptist and the Evangelist provide Gower with saintly voices and perspectives likely to lead readers to the Virgin's pure ways. The most basic connections between the two Saints John, fourteenth-century English Christians recognized, was membership of the Holy Family and thus a closeness to Mary. Hagiography developing the birth stories of the saints, festial sermons, and mystery plays were all sources from which medieval Roman Catholics would have come to know the place of the Baptist and Evangelist in Jesus's extended family. Going beyond popular narratives, Gower claims a knowledge of the saints so profound that he can instruct a cloistered audience. Addressing such an audience in Book 4 of the *Vox Clamantis*, he declares himself to be 'informatus' about the saints after having recourse to writings of or about them.<sup>63</sup> An expert such as Gower would have control over the complicated details surrounding the Holy Family's generational tree, in which the Saints John were shoots from separate limbs. In creating a Baptist-speaker as conveyed by the Gospel of John, and (as we shall continue to investigate in the next chapter) in crafting narrators who support and imitate the Virgin, Gower was concentrating heavily on the sacred marriages that bore good fruit, good speech, and eventually the Word.

It all begins with the line of the Virgin Mary's mother, Anne, whose sister Elizabeth bore John who would become the baptizer and whose daughter Mary Salome bore John who would become the beloved disciple and Evangelist.<sup>64</sup> In Anne's generation, Elizabeth's marriage to Zacharias the priest was sanctified with the late childbirth of John the Baptist.<sup>65</sup> As the child of Jesus's grandmother's sister, John the Baptist is Christ's second cousin. Anne, having been married to Joachim and given birth to the Virgin, is widowed and weds twice more, each union producing a daughter named Mary. With Cleophas, Anne bears Mary Cleophae, and with Salomas, Mary Salome. John the Evangelist, a bud of Anne's trinubial tree, is the youngest child of Mary Salome and Zebedeus, and thus, he is Jesus's step / first cousin, born to the Virgin Mary's half-sister. Younger, but closely related, John the Evangelist becomes the beloved disciple, resting upon Christ's breast at the Last Supper. Later, he writes the Gospel of John emphasizing the acuteness of his older cousin's prophecy and the divinity

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63 VC 4. 10, l. 391. Gower writes, *ego sanctorum scripta revolui*, 'revolui' suggesting that he has opened many books and perhaps returned to them or turned them over in his mind often.

64 In some traditions, Elizabeth is Anne's niece. For the genesis of and variations on St Anne's genealogy, see Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, Introduction in *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society*, ed. by Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 1–68.

65 The story of John the Baptist's birth is told in Luke 1. 5–25, 57–66.

of Jesus, his lord and master — a gospel that supplies a major tenet of Gower's rhetoric through the theology of the Word and the *vox clamantis* crying out in Gower's major poems. In addition, according to medieval belief, he receives the vision of Revelation on Patmos.

The best influences for Gower's penitential and apocalyptic rhetoric, the two Saints John are especially close to the Virgin Mary, bearer of the Word. Beyond blood relation to her, they are both influenced by her righteous speech and steadfast faith, and like her, they claim the prerogative of virginity that is a sign of their verbal discipline. The Baptist's conception and birth story are deeply intertwined with the Virgin, his father, Zacharias, (like Mary) receiving an annunciation from Gabriel concerning a holy child. While Mary's annunciation emphasizes the divine impregnation of a virgin, Zacharias's comes as a reward for faithful chastity and results in a child designated 'virginitatis speculum' in the *Legenda aurea*. Performing his priestly duties in the temple, Zacharias hears Gabriel's announcement concerning his wife's conception of a child in their old age, but not believing it, is stricken speechless until at the birth he confirms the baby's name in writing. Zacharias's eventual healing demonstrates the associations among obedient speech, chastity, and the son named John, who both represents and receives the gift of prophetic language. 'Grace' is endowed with the Word. Before the Baptist is born, he leaps in Elizabeth's womb at the sound of Mary's voice and throughout his life continues to prophesy and praise the mission of Jesus. His penitential rhetoric in the wilderness, calling believers to confess and be baptized, assumes a reversal of worldly values that is also present in the Virgin's *Magnificat*. While the Baptist entreats his audiences to repent in preparation for the divine kingdom, the Virgin declares that God

has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,  
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
and exalted those of low degree;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent empty away.<sup>66</sup>

Like the Virgin, who could have been stoned for bearing a child out of wedlock but said 'let it be' to the angel, the Baptist, in danger while imprisoned by Herod, spoke boldly against the tetrarch's incestuous liaison with Herodias.<sup>67</sup> For Mary and then the Baptist, virginal purity supplied a powerful ethos for proclaiming the reversal of corruption under Jesus's reign.

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<sup>66</sup> Matthew 3. 1–2; Luke 1. 46–55 (51–53).

<sup>67</sup> For Mary's response, see Luke 1. 38; for the Baptist's accusations of Herod, see Matthew 14. 3–5; Mark 6. 17–20, and Luke 3. 19–20.

Medieval images support a connection between the Baptist's virginity and penitential preaching. Illuminations in medieval psalters and saints' lives show the saint trampling on rampant sexuality and subduing those who would tempt others to it, such as Salome, Herodias's daughter. In a fourteenth-century English drawing, famous for its monochrome lines in an age of vibrant colours, the Baptist conquers Salome by standing upon her while she executes a gymnastic backbend (Figure 1).<sup>68</sup> This illustration is a full-page image of John the Baptist in the wilderness surrounded by animals, an image that was pasted to the front of British Library, MS Royal 10 B XIV, probably because it reflects the patron saint of an owner also named John — John of Lingfield, lecturer in canon law at Oxford (c. 1365). Salome is directly below the Baptist, on whose short tunic, the camel's head dangles like a phallus; there are lions at his left and right, one eating a hare (notorious for sex drive).<sup>69</sup> According to Julian M. Luxford,

There is a deliberate and striking allusion to chastity and lust in the configuration of the saint, Salome, and the camel's head [...] John, the 'virginitatis speculum' of the *Legenda aurea*, and the 'hostis luxuria' of English monastic imagination, tramples this exemplification of lust as effectively as Christ tramples the adder and basilisk.<sup>70</sup>

John the Baptist, who leapt in the womb upon hearing the Virgin's voice, leaps upon the dancer who represents all that the Virgin rejects.

As with the Baptist, John the Evangelist's intimacy with the Virgin and imitation of her chastity are signs of internalization of the Word. The gospels do not elaborate on the Evangelist's story in the same way that they tell the Baptist's, but the Marian details with which Gower would have been familiar can be fleshed out from the disciple's self-representation and popular saints' lives. The *Legenda aurea* reports the Evangelist's renunciation of the marriage bed shortly after his wedding to Mary Magdalene and the blessings that both John and the Magdalen received after adopting a chaste existence in imitation of Christ's mother.<sup>71</sup> The St John's College life of the Evangelist edited by Waters posits that the wedding at Cana was the Evangelist's marriage feast, attended by the Virgin and Christ because of family ties and culminating in the refusal by all of the pleasures of the flesh.<sup>72</sup> The St John's College text continues with the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, where Jesus took John, along with Peter and James, and declared these disciples 'sons of thunder' because they heard God's

68 For an analysis of this image, see Julian M. Luxford, 'Out of the Wilderness: A Fourteenth-Century English Drawing of John the Baptist', *Gesta*, 49.2 (2010), 137–50.

69 Luxford, 'Out of the Wilderness', p. 140.

70 Luxford, 'Out of the Wilderness', p. 141.

71 de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, p. 96.

72 Waters, ed., 'The Life of St John', ll. 71–84.



Figure 1. The Baptist conquers Solome. © British Library Board, Royal MS 10 B XIV, fol. 3<sup>v</sup>.

Word there. In hearing God say, 'This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased', the Evangelist had a blessing much like that of John the Baptist, who heard God's voice after Jesus's baptism.<sup>73</sup> The Evangelist becomes the beloved disciple, leaning on Jesus's breast at the Last Supper, remaining with Jesus during the crucifixion, and receiving the Virgin into his care.<sup>74</sup> According to the St John's College life, it was fitting that Jesus entrusted his mother to John, both virgins, now not aunt and nephew, but truly mother and son.<sup>75</sup> 'Oure Lorde Ihesu Crist bytook to Sainte Petir the keyes of heuen', the author explains, 'to Saynt Iohn he commended his holy modir. Both are modirs, Marie and holy chirche'.<sup>76</sup> Like Mary's sufferings, John's were intensely com-passionate, and neither died a martyr, but suffered excessively in spirit.<sup>77</sup> '[N]ext oure lady', the author declares, '[John] ys moost worthy virgyn'.<sup>78</sup> Hamburger argues for the apotheosis of the Evangelist because of an intimacy with Christ that is dependent upon John's intimacy with and similarity to the Virgin.<sup>79</sup> Gower makes this point in the *Mirour de l'Omme* when he claims that John was closest to Jesus because of virginity and that virginity is like an eagle, the Evangelist's icon, flying 'high on the winds of holy teaching'.<sup>80</sup> Through the Baptist's *vox* and the Evangelist's direction, Gower heralds the holy teachings in many of his poems, high instruction that might be heard by virgins who are both spiritually and genealogically familiar with Christ and attached to his mother.

In the *Mirour de l'Omme* the Baptist's *vox* inveighs against the wickedness of each estate that turns away from Mary's moral example, while the Evangelist's direction leads toward contemplation of the Virgin as a cure for such wickedness. Mary's moral example is characterized in the *Mirour's* list of personified Virtues, while contemplation of the Virgin is invited in the concluding section of the poem. As Chapter Three of this book will show, the *Mirour's* characterization of personified Virtues, occupying a long middle section of the poem and applauded by 'John', relies heavily on Marian values. Chapter Three will explore those Marian

73 Waters, ed., 'The Life of St John', ll. 85–117. The comparison between the Baptist and Evangelist occurs in the following lines: 'And in this he had a 3yfte of God like to Saynt Iohn Baptist. For here he herde the Fadir in voice, he see the Sone, oure Lorde Ihesu Crist, in more glorious lyknes than dyd Saynt Iohn Baptist, and he see the Holy Gost in lyknes of that bright clowde. And so was shewed there to him the holy and blessed Trinite' (ll. 103–07).

74 John 13. 23; John 19. 25–27.

75 Waters, ed., 'The Life of St John', ll. 145–2032.

76 Waters, ed., 'The Life of St John', ll. 170–72.

77 Waters, ed., 'The Life of St John', ll. 708–17.

78 Waters, ed., 'The Life of St John', l. 761.

79 Hamburger, *St John the Divine*. Hamburger shows how medieval art establishes a likeness between St John and Christ. Only a few very holy people like John and David, Hamburger contends, were drawn like Christ, with a cruciform nimbus or backdrop (p. 10).

80 MO, ll. 17038–40: *Car il porta resemblement / Al Aigle, qui plus haltement / Vola de la divine aprie.*

resonances, link them to Gower's theory of Marian rhetoric, and bear upon the implications for gendered discourse. Here, it is important to point out that the Baptist-like preaching against the clergy, government, and people that takes place after the presentation of the Virtues in the *Mirour* sets the behaviour of these classes against the chastity, clemency, and truthfulness of the Virgin's example. The preaching of virginal virtue by 'John' in the *Mirour* leads naturally to the contemplation of the source of that virtue in the poem's conclusion, a life of the Virgin Mary. Although Chapter Six will elucidate Gower's Marian conclusions, here let us simply observe that in the *Mirour* 'John' achieves an intimacy with the Virgin by telling her life story, an act that mirrors the Evangelist's increasing attention to Mary as he becomes her new son after the crucifixion and the support of her old age.

Inside the structure of the *Mirour*, which spans from the opening meditation on John's gospel to the closing meditation on the Virgin, the narrator's voice resonates with the Baptist's preaching against the depravities of Edward III's England. In later poems, the *Vox Clamantis* and *Confessio Amantis*, Gower's Baptist-like narrator will similarly inveigh against corruption in the Ricardian court and society, the poet's habitual jeremiad against fourteenth-century iniquities often being regarded as an estates satire. As G. R. Owst demonstrated at length, sermons against the depravities of the estates were common in late medieval England, and in his characterizations of the particular failings of each estate, Gower incorporates *exempla* often used by well-known preachers of the age, for instance John Bromyard or Robert Rypon.<sup>81</sup> In Gower, the estates satire that elicits shame for the faults of one's own class is one of the preacher's tools for provoking repentance in a series of *ad status* sermons, each aimed at a different rank of society.<sup>82</sup> In the *Mirour*, another of the preacher's tools is appealing to devotion to the Virgin Mary. The special relationship between 'John' and the Virgin influences him to amplify the theme of chastity for the current audience and, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Three, to refer more often to Mary as a model of holiness.

As Maria Wickert noticed, Gower's poetry deploys both kinds of sermon mentioned in Alan of Lille's *ars praedicandi* and associated with John the Baptist — preaching on vices and virtues and on the spiritual needs of each social class.<sup>83</sup> These sermonic genres are deployed one before the

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81 G. R. Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters & of the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), p. 97, p. 121, p. 187, p. 208, p. 212, p. 260, p. 292, p. 353, p. 410, p. 414, p. 566. Owst takes G. C. Macaulay to task for not emphasizing Gower's debt to medieval sermons. See *Literature and the Pulpit*, pp. 230–31.

82 Carolyn Muessig documents the extant *ad status* sermon collections in the medieval West. See Carolyn Muessig, 'Audience and Preacher: *Ad Status* Sermons and Social Classifications', in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) pp. 256–76.

83 Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, p. 59.

other in the *Mirour*: first, 'John' provides a description of all the vices and virtues, and then he addresses the failings of the clergy, ruling classes, and commons. In the *Mirour*'s discussion of corruption in the various estates, 'John' imitates the harsh words of the Baptist to the people:

You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father', for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.<sup>84</sup>

Just as the Baptist warns a Jewish audience against taking comfort in the Abrahamic lineage, the *Mirour*'s narrator openly warns the king (though without naming the reigning monarch) against believing his august lineage will protect him from the consequences of sin. It did not shield David from punishment for his debauchery with Bathsheba and will not safeguard English monarchs, 'John' threatens in a veiled allusion to Edward III's affair with Alice Perrers.<sup>85</sup> If any king yields to the flesh and thereby brings down his people, he will not escape the axe. Such a king trades a wanton conquest in bed for the treasure of virtue.<sup>86</sup>

Attacking not only the nobility's false sense of privilege, 'John' charges the English clergy with the same accusation that the Baptist launched against Herod.<sup>87</sup> Having demonstrated in the beginning of the *Mirour* that all evil arises from the Devil's consanguineous coupling, 'John' repeatedly inveighs against clerical complicity in incest.<sup>88</sup> He insists that spiritual leaders involved in illicit relationships should not be able to claim the church's protection, though, like the Baptist in the Gospel of John, he is careful not to imply that he himself is the source of the Word and this penitential message. What I mean to say about the clergy, the narrator clarifies, is expressed in the '[m]urmer, compleinte, vois et cry' of the 'cristiene gent'.<sup>89</sup> In this way, all Christian people fill 'John' with a voice and cry such as the Baptist's *vox clamantis* against even church officials who

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84 Luke 3. 7–9. Wickert writes that Gower's comments on God's judgement in the VC show that the poet believes that the axe has already been laid at the tree. See Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, pp. 57–58.

85 MO, ll. 22819–22.

86 MO, ll. 22813–18: *Rois est des femmes trop deçu, / Quant plus les ayme que son dieu, / Dont laist honour pour foldelit : / Cil Rois ne serra pas cremu, / Q'ensi voet lasser son escu / Et querre la bataille ou lit.*

87 John the Baptist warned Herod about living unlawfully with his sister-in-law. See Matthew 14. 3–5; Mark 6. 17–20; and Luke 3. 19–20.

88 MO, ll. 205–10032, 18421–21768.

89 MO, ll. 18444–18445.

consider themselves righteous. One of the first sins 'John' mentions in his charges against the clergy is the papal pardon for cousins in endogamous marriages.<sup>90</sup> If the incestuous sin of interfamily alliance is so dangerous to the soul, the narrator wonders, why are betrothed cousins allowed a dispensation before the nuptials?<sup>91</sup> The harshest accusations against incest occur in the sections on the wickedness of parish priests and friars, because these are directly responsible for guiding the people. Especially the friars, G. R. Owst noted, were likely to know the troubles of the people because of their mission to move among them.<sup>92</sup> Priests commit sexual sins with their sheep, 'John' charges, a corrupt licentiousness involving spiritual incest: that of a father with children.<sup>93</sup> 'O foolish priest', the narrator declaims in an attempt to humble and shame the perpetrators.<sup>94</sup> In addition, one of the friars' main sins is incest, another illicit unchastity in which a supposed spiritual caretaker violates both body and spirit.<sup>95</sup> In contrast to these deplorable acts, the Virgin's spiritual intimacy with her Father and Son models a faithful and obedient relationship between humanity and the divine.

The Baptist-like excoriation of the clergy and others is guided by the authorial mastery of the Evangelist, priest of priests. Not only the Baptist, but also the Evangelist informs the *Mirour's* example of a vigorous preacher, the Evangelist being a theologian, the main exemplar for a priest. In fact, in the Sarum Use, St John the Evangelist's feast day (December 27) was known as the feast of priests. The priest who does not care enough to preach is like smoke in our vision, claims the *Mirour's* narrator.<sup>96</sup> Vision is exactly what the Evangelist represents: as the eagle of Ezekiel, his piercing sight perceives Roman Catholic theology as articulated in the Gospel of John and images from heaven as recorded in Revelation. Incorporating the Baptist's voice and the Evangelist's standards for priests, Gower preaches against sin when the priests will not. Among the worst infractions perpetrated by the sexually corrupt clergy members, 'John' declares, is the refusal to preach, when their main responsibility is to turn their flocks away from temptation. Since Archbishop Pecham outlined the expectations for sermons at the Lambeth Council of 1281, English churchmen were taught to preach the basics of Roman Catholicism (the Fourteen Articles, Ten Commandments, Seven Deadly Sins and more) at least four times during

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90 MO, ll. 18481–92.

91 MO, l. 18493–96: *Mais si ce soit ensi mortiel, / Comme ils le dient lors au tiel / Pourquoi vuellont devant la mein / Dispenser?*

92 Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit*, p. 220.

93 MO, l. 20331–32: *D'incest et fole incontinence, / Trop fait horrible violence.*

94 MO, l. 20461: *O fols curetz.*

95 MO, l. 21409: *Incest, Flatour, Ipocrital.*

96 MO, l. 21733: *Cil q'ad science et point ne cure / De nous precher [...] / Au fume que noz: oils obscure / Resemble.*



each year.<sup>97</sup> Bishops, especially, the *Mirour's* narrator claims, are ordered to cry out against sin in the manner of the Baptist, but instead let their flock go astray without correction.<sup>98</sup> In the *Mirour* 'John' accepts the pastor's obligations, and he eventually finds his own spiritual comfort where the Evangelist did, in the company of the Virgin.<sup>99</sup>

The preaching of 'John' deploys a bevy of stylistic figures that are the hallmarks of sermonic style and Revelation to convey holy images and cosmic secrets. The charges against the king's and the churchmen's licentiousness are brought in fearlessly penetrating language, similar to the Baptist's sermon on the axe at the root of the trees. As in that sermon, with its central arboreal metaphor, the preaching in the *Mirour* uses figures of speech to whip up shame and cause lament in the face of imminent destruction. These figures are most often *apostrophe*, *anaphora*, and various forms of *repetitio*, stylistic flourishes that are favoured by the poet to underline the truth, as we saw in 'Gower's Rethorique'. Direct address and repetitions identify the audience as the target of the discourse and imprint the words in the hearers' minds; for these reasons, they are the traditional embellishments of sermons. In the *Mirour's* discussion of the king's sexual and other failings, Gower envelops his appeals to the better side of Edward III with the serial apostrophe 'O King' and ends the passage with 'O Lord', the king's master.<sup>100</sup> He uses a similar kind of bracketing structure for his accusations against the nobles and knights, in which he begins the passage with an apostrophe, repeats it several times throughout the discourse, and ends the satire with it so that the preacher talks directly to the sinner while he points out and underscores sins. 'O Noble', 'John' repeats, avoid the pride and greed that results in your orphans' suffering.<sup>101</sup> 'O Knight', 'John' cries out multiple times, help the poor and reject vainglory in winning prizes abroad.<sup>102</sup> 'Men of Law', he calls, your gain is empty; repeating 'woe unto you', 'John' hints at the eternal punishments that will come to the covetous lawyer.<sup>103</sup>

The harshness of the preacher's critique is applied to all social classes and justified both by a marked slippage away from the Marian ideal and by an impending apocalypse. Channelling the Baptist's *vox*, the *Mirour de l'Homme* lobs accusations at and offers spiritual healing to every kind

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97 H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 203.

98 MO, ll. 19081–20328.

99 G. R. Owst comments that the MO is a 'perfect mirror' of what comes from the pulpit in the late fourteenth century. See Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit*, p. 230.

100 MO, ll. 22285, 23029, 23041, 23077, 23089, 23137, and 23197: a series of *O* roys, ending in *O dieus*.

101 MO, ll. 23521–23591.

102 MO, ll. 23893–23965.

103 MO, ll. 24181–24565.

of person, from the luxuriating Pope to the dishonest food vendor. For each estate Marian virtues, treated at length in Chapter Three, offer a salve for stinging rebukes: the Virgin's mercy is a counterpart to the judge's injustice, her discipline to the knight's lechery. The practice of chastising each estate reflects the Lateran Council's order that penance must be appropriate for both the sin and the situation of the sinner. The narrator's mode of preaching also reflects medieval associations between the Baptist and *ad status* sermons, or sermons composed specifically for various classes of people. Bonaventure, for instance, names John's sermon in Luke 3. 10–14 an *ad status* sermon, supplying different teachings to each category of a triple audience: *ad turbas*, *ad publicanos*, *ad milites* (to the crowd, to the publicans, to the soldiers):<sup>104</sup>

And the multitudes asked him, 'What then shall we do?'  
 And he answered them, 'He who has two coats, let him share  
 with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.'  
 Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, 'Teacher,  
 what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Collect no more than is  
 appointed you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what shall we do?'  
 And he said to them, 'Rob no one by violence or by false accusation,  
 and be content with your wages.'

Forerunner of Christ and harbinger of the Lateran Council's dictate, John the Baptist offers different guidelines for penitence and righteous living depending on the social or economic group. In medieval Catholic practice, the Baptist's legacy of preaching meant that the faithful might hear an *ad status* sermon on the saint's feast days or when the day's gospel reading focused on the Baptist. During Advent, for instance, a penitential sermon on John the Baptist was required, preferably one directed to the immediate needs of the people.<sup>105</sup>

Although meant to save, pleas for better English morals take a dire tone in the *Mirour de l'Omme* since, as 'John' announces, the Antichrist has come, a warning that collapses the Baptist's *ad status* sermons with the Evangelist's apocalyptic prophecies.<sup>106</sup> The arrival of the Antichrist — or a

104 St Bonaventura, *Commentarius in Evangelium Sancti Lucae in Opera omnia*, 10 vols (Florence: Quarrachi, 1886), 7, p. 75. Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, p. 56.

105 On the connection between John the Baptist, Advent sermons, and preaching *ad status*, see Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, pp. 65–86; also John H. Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), pp. 141–44. Both Wickert and Fisher cite Bonaventure on the recommendation that the penitential sermons of Advent be *ad status*. See St Bonaventura, *Commentariua in Evangelium Sancti Lucae*, p. 75.

106 MO, l. 18793–96: *Q'est ce que l'en dist Antecrist / Vendra? Sainte escripture dist / Qe d'Antechriste le noun amonte, / Qui le contraire fait du Crist.*

series of antichrists — is a preoccupation not only of Revelation but also the epistles which Gower believed to be composed by the Evangelist.<sup>107</sup> Setting English corruption in the context of the Evangelist's apocalyptic visions, the proclamation of the Antichrist's arrival in the *Mirour* reinforces the status of 'John' as both preacher and prophet. The *Mirour's* attack on fraud among the merchants, for instance, demonstrates well the merging of affective preaching and apocalyptic prophecy. At the same time, a sermon to the merchants appeals to their respect for Marian virtues and repudiates vice through the characterization of Lady Wool. A famous encomium to Lady Wool, replete with sermonic apostrophe and repetition, as well as associations with the Whore of Babylon and the end of times, occurs in the *ad status* sermon on international trade directed at the Staplers.

To put the encomium to Lady Wool in context, as both John H. Fisher and Craig E. Berthelet recall, in the fourteenth century wool was England's most successful export and thus an object of Gower's national pride.<sup>108</sup> Inspiring feelings of patriotism, the *Mirour's* Wool is a 'dame de noblesce', who is 'cheris' (cherished) because of the support she has given England.<sup>109</sup> Like a British princess, she is 'belle', 'blanche', and 'bien delie' (beautiful, fair, and slim), a lady inspiring the country's 'amour'.<sup>110</sup> If treated honourably, Wool might distribute favours to many for the common good. However, these feelings of patriotism and security under Wool's patronage soon give way to suspicion and fear as 'John' explains how often Triche (Fraud) controls the dishonest wool merchant. The preacher launches an impassioned sermon against the Stapler's fraudulent practices in English warehouses as well as in foreign exchange, usury, and disingenuous negotiations.<sup>111</sup> As Roger Ladd explains, in order to regulate supply and impose taxes the crown controlled the few ports permitted to move wool and thus encouraged monopolies and political corruption.<sup>112</sup> If the king wished to manipulate the wool trade so as to channel profits

107 For John the Beloved Disciple's thoughts on the Antichrist, see 1 John 2. 18: 'Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour.' Also, 1 John 4. 3, 11 John 1. 7, and 1 John 2. 22: 'Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.'

108 Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher*, pp. 97–98; Craig E. Berthelet, *Chaucer, Gower, Hoccleve and the Commercial Practices of Late Fourteenth-Century London* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013), p. 29.

109 MO, ll. 25369, 25390.

110 MO, ll. 25405–06.

111 MO, l. 25417. Jill Mann discusses the triplet of foreign exchange, usury, and negotiation in bad faith in *Piers Plowman*. See Jill Mann, *Chaucer and the Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 100.

112 Roger A. Ladd, *Antimerchantism in Late Medieval English Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 63–65.

toward the crown's endeavours, he complied with the fraud taking place in the country's warehouses. The struggle for profits among less-favoured merchants sparked rivalries, as in the 1370s when the powerful Nicolas Bembre and the grocers controlled the Staple and merchants such as John de Northampton appealed to the king for independent licences to trade.<sup>113</sup> In London and sanctioned port cities, wool was a source of wealth as well as of temptation. Beyond English shores, the wool trade participated in the global market economy, exposing merchants to practices of usury. In the *Mirour* 'John' calls upon Lady Wool to witness the instability and abuse surrounding her, and to acknowledge that while accompanying traders across the sea, Fraud has become her pimp. He takes her to foreign countries where he exchanges her for money and leaves many in England poor.<sup>114</sup> She has become like the Whore of Babylon, originating in the North Country, but spreading corruption everywhere.<sup>115</sup> 'John' exclaims in horror that she indiscriminately involves herself with Christians, pagan, and Saracens alike.<sup>116</sup> 'O leine', 'O leine', (O wool, O wool), 'John' cries repeatedly as he agonizes over the contamination of England's best resource and the merchant class.<sup>117</sup> Wool is at once the broken promise of Britain and a dreaded sign of the Antichrist's presence. Through her depiction Gower combines both the Baptist's preaching against licentiousness and the Evangelist's vision of the end of time.

As a harbinger of the Apocalypse, Lady Wool with her falsely pure fleece is the enemy of both John the Baptist who identifies the Lamb of God in scripture and of Our Lady, who bore the Lamb for the foreordained sacrifice. Although according to the *Mirour* merchants regard Wool as a 'duesse' (goddess),<sup>118</sup> she is hardly a counterpart to Mary's holiness, 'John' reveals. Under Wool's blanket consciences are 'blesche' (wounded), while in the Virgin's protection humankind is saved.<sup>119</sup> The *Mirour* compares Lady Wool to the Virgin Mary not only through the metaphorical network surrounding the Lamb, but also through the rhetorical form that Gower employs to personify Wool. Amplifying her physical features and

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<sup>113</sup> Ladd, *Antimerchantism*, p. 65.

<sup>114</sup> MO, ll. 25399–404.

<sup>115</sup> MO, ll. 25405–25416. Gervase Mathew (*The Court of Richard II* [London: Norton, 1968], p. 79) suggests that MO, including 48 lines on wool and the wool trade, might have been written for a merchant group at the Wool Staple, perhaps a situation like a religious guild. Jonathan Hsy discusses this passage in *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism, and Medieval Literature* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), pp. 104–05. Hsy notes that Wool, who unites merchants, is a 'universalizing force', as well as 'an idealized female love object' (104). Hsy sees here a collusion between 'business and courtly discourses' (105).

<sup>116</sup> MO, ll. 25378–79.

<sup>117</sup> MO, ll. 25417–25428.

<sup>118</sup> MO, l. 25369.

<sup>119</sup> MO, l. 25377.

career over approximately fifty poetic lines,<sup>120</sup> Gower imitates the *effictiones* of beautiful women such as Helen of Troy, omnipresent descriptions of famous heroines, that are offered in the arts of poetry as exemplars for student compositions. In the thirteenth century Marian arts of poetry, grammar textbooks that employ descriptions of the Virgin in composition exercises, replace the *effictiones* of Helen or Marcia (Cato's wife) with lauds to Mary.<sup>121</sup> In the *Mirour* the encomium to Wool functions as a parodic set-piece on the Virgin, a reversal meant to cause dismay in the patriotic and horror in the religious. The clustering of emotions incited by the *modus praedicandi* and *modus prophetarum* in the *Mirour* are meant to lead the merchants and all readers to the true Mother, well of virtue and source of the Word, in order to prepare for the Second Coming.

As Edwards puts it, 'Preaching and prophecy ground authorship in the apparently settled doctrine of literal and figurative instruction [...] to put it beyond contingency and mutability'.<sup>122</sup> In the *Mirour* 'John' investigates incestuous sins reproduced by the Devil and woeful changes that degrade English society in an attempt to rise beyond them. Scandals in the wool trade and corruption in all the estates recede when a narrator reflecting the Saints John points to Marian virtues.

### A More Political 'John' in a Much-Revised *Vox Clamantis*

As the *Mirour de l'Omme* maintains a focus on the Virgin and the consanguineous conception of evil, 'John' presents sin and salvation in a domestic allegory — with sin being the result of incest and salvation dependent upon the Holy Family. There 'John' derives much of his authority through intimacy with the Virgin Mother and adherence to chastity. When delivering an *ad status* sermon or gesturing toward another appearance of the Antichrist, 'John' addresses the wider world, but he draws his strength to confront it in Marian contemplations. While the *Mirour* turns inward and deploys familial metaphors, the *Vox Clamantis*, on the other hand, turns outward, involving 'John' extensively in the apocalyptic scenes of English society that are the subject of his dreams. If incest is the controlling motif in the *Mirour* to recall a well-known topic of the Baptist's preaching, visionary sight is the predominating matter of the *Vox*, in which 'John' presents images like those of Revelation. With these terrifying depictions,

<sup>120</sup> MO, ll. 25357–25428.

<sup>121</sup> On arts of poetry with exemplary descriptions of classical women and the Marian *artes* that imitated them, see Georgiana Donavin, 'The Virgin Mary as Lady Grammar in the Medieval West', *Traditio*, 74 (2019), 279–305.

<sup>122</sup> Edwards, *Invention and Authorship*, p. 72.

'John' attempts to influence English lords 'to make straight the way of the Lord';<sup>123</sup> the *Vox Clamantis* portrays 'John' 'crying in the desert' of an English wasteland, his connections to the English royalty and people augmenting his position as a prophet revealing divine judgements on political matters.

This politicization of the narrator's voice derives from Richard II's devotion to the Baptist and respect for Edward the Confessor's attachment to the Evangelist. As John Bowers concludes, the *Vox* is a 'literary gesture [...] calculated to honour Richard II by acknowledging his patron saint'.<sup>124</sup> However, as Gower became increasingly disappointed in Richard's ability to govern, the *Vox*'s narrator aligns himself with the Baptist and Evangelist not to spiritually support the monarch but instead to inveigh against his policies and their consequences. When Johannine rhetoric fails to inspire dismay and personal correction in Ricardian leaders, 'John' will openly treat Richard as a fourteenth-century Herod and deploy apocalyptic imagery to equate Henry IV's accession with the Second Coming of Christ. Throughout many emendations that foreground the public persona of 'John', Gower relies on the Evangelist's vision to locate meaning amidst chaotic events that seem to point to the end of time.

To explore the full significance of the narrator's more political construction, a survey of his role in the expanded *Vox Clamantis* will take place in this chapter section and the one following. Analysing 'John' according to the order in which Gower wrote this poem, we will be able to see the rhetorical template upon which Gower constructed the ethos for the revisions and additions to the *Vox*. Although the original version of the poem offers six books of *ad status* preaching and apocalyptic visioning, the expanded *Vox* includes the *Visio Anglie* — appended to the original poem after the Uprising of 1381 — and the *Cronica Tripertita*, which functions as a Lancastrian (1399) conclusion to the *Visio* and *Vox* in several manuscripts.<sup>125</sup> The amplified *Vox Clamantis* begins with a horrifying dream vision of the Uprising, continues to a series of *ad status* sermons that culminate in another nightmare — that of Nebuchadnezzar — and concludes with a chronicle of Lancastrian success in preserving the country from, as Gower saw it, the debacle of Richard's kingship. That Gower meant for the *Visio-Vox-Cronica* to be a conglomerate and continuous text is evident in his tomb, where these works are represented as one book; in the colophon to the *Vox Clamantis*; and in the prose gloss to Part One of the *Cronica*, announcing that 'The Voice of One Crying' includes the narrative of the Uprising and a chronicle of what took place after the lower

<sup>123</sup> John 1. 23.

<sup>124</sup> Bowers, *The Politics of Pearl*, p. 86.

<sup>125</sup> For a discussion of VC manuscripts that begin with the VA and end in the CrT and on the VC's composition and ensuring A and B texts, see Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, pp. 1–6.

classes rebelled.<sup>126</sup> While we acknowledge Gower's intention to craft one continuous book, examining the poem's biblical ethos according to the order in which the expanded *Vox* is written will help to pinpoint the ways that 'John' addresses evolving political circumstances.

With so many additions, the text presents a monstrous body, as Eve Salisbury describes it: the *Vox* could be said to mirror an apocalyptic beast.<sup>127</sup> In its Johannine accretion, the text of the *Vox Clamantis*, including *Visio*, *Vox* proper, and *Cronica*, can be compared not only to the Beast, but also to the additive English Apocalypse books that gathered hagiographic materials concerning the Evangelist together with the text of Revelation and various commentaries. As Suzanne Lewis notes about the manuscript tradition for English Apocalypse books, 'Despite the solemn warning at the end of Revelation [...] the impulse to edit, translate, delete, and add glosses proved irresistible', an impulse to which Gower yielded in his apocalyptic *Vox*.<sup>128</sup> The expanded *Vox Clamantis* includes a political hagiography of Henry IV, preaching based in prophecy, a fourteenth-century chronicle constructed as an apocalyptic allegory, and various commentaries on the meaning of all of these discourses for each social class. Indeed, Lewis likens Gower's authorship of the *Vox* to the Evangelist's of Revelation: just as St John is shown in thirteenth-century Apocalypse books writing to the seven churches in Asia and thus reacting to contemporary matters, so Gower addresses the English people and compares current events to those expected in the time of the Antichrist.<sup>129</sup> From the beginning of his composition process, Gower determined to make both John the Baptist and John the Evangelist central to the *Vox Clamantis*. Matthew W. Irvin observes that the *Vox* proper is 'bookended' by the narrator's statements that he speaks 'in propria persona' (as 'John') about receiving the matter in sleep (divine truths such as were revealed to the Saints John).<sup>130</sup>

Before the addition of the *Visio Anglie* and *Cronica Tripartita*, the *Vox*'s original concept was recorded in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 214 and the Hatfield Hall Codex, manuscripts containing what are now the second to

126 In his tomb in the Chapel of St John the Baptist in what is now Southwark Cathedral, Gower's head rests on three books with rhyming titles: *Speculum Meditantis*, *Confessio Amantis*, and *Vox Clamantis*. The latter title seems to represent the corporate Latin work that we are discussing in this chapter. The colophon to the *Vox* explains that the combined texts of VA, VC, and CrT tell the story of Richard's reign. See Siân Echard, 'Last Words: Latin at the End of the *Confessio Amantis*', in *Interstices: Studies in Middle English and Anglo-Latin Texts in Honour of A. G. Rigg*, ed. by Richard Firth Green and Linne R. Mooney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 99–121. The prose gloss to Part One of the CrT makes the same point.

127 Salisbury, 'Remembering Origins', pp. 159–84.

128 Suzanne Lewis, *Reading Images: Narrative Discourse and Reception in the Thirteenth-Century Illuminated Apocalypse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 337.

129 Lewis, *Reading Images*, p. 25.

130 Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, p. 35.

the seventh books of this major Latin poem. In the original introduction to the *Vox* 'John' enjoins the people to cast aside tempting idols and put their faith in God; in the next five books he addresses the ills of English society under the rule of young Richard II, whom Gower believed to be abused by bad counsel. Just as Gower claims in the *Mirour* to take responsibility for preaching when the priests will not, in the *Vox*, he advises the king, church, and people when the councillors do not. With a Baptist-like *vox*, this advice comes again as if from the pulpit. 'John', launching painfully direct accusations, fulminates against the abuses of each estate. He compares priests to salesmen in their cupidity, knights to fearful men in their inability to defend the people, and ambitious servants to beasts in their ignorance.<sup>131</sup> While the verse is a tissue of Ovidian phrases and the diction full of double entendre, the meaning is excruciatingly clear for the sinners whom the narrator exposes. 'John' deploys the *ad status* sermon much as he had in the *Mirour*, though in the Latin poem he speaks less about Marian chastity and more straightforwardly to the king as the leader responsible to correct infractions. Since Richard II was, but Edward III had not been, the Baptist's devotee, 'John' can appeal more directly to the grandson.<sup>132</sup> The *Mirour* may warn Edward of licentiousness and other failings, but it does so without naming the monarch; the *Vox*, on the other hand, features an open letter addressed to Richard by name, a close analysis of which will appear in Chapter Four of this book on dictaminal traditions. The narrator's main hope is that the young king will grow in wisdom to confront and conquer his country's spiritual crisis, figured at the end of the original poem in an apocalyptic vision from the Book of Daniel: Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

The core of the *Vox Clamantis*, Books 2 to 7, constructs a grieving and visionary Johannine ethos that grounds later revisions and additions, though the voice of 'John' is stronger in the *Visio Anglie* and more subdued in the *Cronica Tripartita*. Throughout the expanded *Vox* 'John' is a tearful herald who reveals English disasters forecast in prophetic dreams and the people's sins that are hastening the Apocalypse. As Kurt Olsson remarks, the Prologue to Book 2 establishes a master plan for the original *Vox*, which the accretions to the text underscore.<sup>133</sup> While Maria Wickert

<sup>131</sup> VC 3.19, ll. 1525–26; VC 5.8, ll. 497–8; VC 5.10, ll. 631–2.

<sup>132</sup> In his entry for the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, G. C. Macaulay comments upon the similarity of the estates satire in the MO, VC, and Prologue to the CA. Fisher elaborates on this point when he considers the 'themes' that run through Gower's poetry. See G. C. Macaulay, 'John Gower', *Cambridge History of English Literature II: The End of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Sir Adolphus William Ward and Alfred Rayney Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), p. 143; Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher*, pp. 141–50 (on preaching themes).

<sup>133</sup> Kurt Olsson, 'John Gower's *Vox Clamantis* and the Medieval Idea of Place', *Studies in Philology*, 84.2 (Spring 1987), 136, 148. Minnis also discusses the ways in which the



persuasively argues that ‘the figure of John the Baptist signified a concrete programme’ for that master plan,<sup>134</sup> allusions to the Evangelist and other prophets create an apocalyptic setting for the Baptist-like preaching. The original *Vox* portrays a sorrowful ‘John’ speaking in both *modus praedicandi* and *modus prophetarum* and weeping over English catastrophes revealed to him by God. In all registers he reacts strongly to the mediated Word, his emotions meant to shock the audience — including his monarch — into spiritual correction. The forerunner and the beloved disciple are thus yoked into narrative position as a ‘nuntius’, just as the Baptist was the woeful messenger of Christ’s first coming and the Evangelist of the second.<sup>135</sup>

This ‘nuntius’ is presented in the gloss and Prologue to Book 2 as both a clamorous and mournful voice, as ‘verba doloris’ (words of sorrow) that came to the narrator through ‘voce et clamore’ (a cry and a clamouring).<sup>136</sup> The tears are part of the enhanced thematic of envisioning — of seeing the horrors abounding in England through dreams. The weeping eye becomes a microcosm of pious reaction to truths revealed by God: what the Johannine eye perceives, it immediately mourns, even though the world seems slow to observe and respond. The narrator’s sadness correlates to the Baptist’s woe for the sins of his age and the Evangelist’s grief over exile and visions of calamity. Late medieval English devotional images encouraged just such a portrayal of a tearful ‘John’. During Gower’s lifetime, imitations of the mournful *Johannesschüssel*, the Baptist’s head on a platter as served up by Salome, were being mass produced for export in Northampton, and depictions of a sobbing Evangelist occur in English Apocalypse books when no one in heaven or earth is proven to be worthy to open the scroll and break its seals.<sup>137</sup> In addition to reflecting images of the grief-stricken Saints John, the fluid pouring from the preacher’s sorrowing eyes also recalls the salvific waters of baptism, to which both the forerunner and the beloved disciple were connected. Baptism expresses the forerunner’s central mission: to bring penitents to the River Jordan to be immersed in a new life of righteousness and to baptize Jesus as the saviour enters the temptations in the wilderness. Although the Evangelist

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Prologues to VC books 2 and 3 focus on preaching and prophecy. See Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, pp. 172–77.

134 In addition to her remark on the Baptist’s providing a ‘programme’ for the VC, Maria Wickert has called the core text ‘a Johannine class sermon’. In effect, she argues, John the Baptist’s sermon in Luke addresses all classes and thus can be compared to the popular *ad status* sermons of the Middle Ages. See Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, p. 59.

135 VC Prologue to Book 2, l. 76.

136 VC Prologue to Book 2, l. 84; VC Gloss to Prologue to Book 2.

137 On the *Johannesschüssel*’s English crafting and exportation, see Barbara Baert, *Caput Johannis in Disco (Essay on a Man’s Head)*, trans. by Irene Schaudies (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 91. Depictions of the Evangelist’s sobbing occur at Revelation 5.4.

was not a baptizer, his statement in Revelation that Christian martyrs have ‘washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’ gestures toward a sacrificial baptism.<sup>138</sup> The power of baptismal waters flows through ‘John’ in *ad status* sermons moving his audience toward the river, and the sacrificial urge motivates him to speak truth to power. In Stephanie L. Batkie’s estimation, the *Vox*’s aquatic imagery, focalized in the narrator’s weeping, calls readers to enter the flow of the poem, open ears to the multivocal ‘John’ and hear a message of faith in the complex sounds of the verse.<sup>139</sup> Through a baptismal rhetoric of tears, verbalizing sacred images and liturgical associations with the Saints John, the narrator hopes to move the English toward salvation.

‘John’ often speaks his sorrowful message with Ovidian verses on being cast out of Rome. The Ovidian cento that lays the verbal foundation for the original *Vox* and especially for the *Visio Anglie* might be considered a contemporary Johannine repurposing of Augustan age narratives of exile.<sup>140</sup> The classical poet’s laments on banishment in Tomis were well known, the *Epistulae ex Ponto* supplying a vocabulary for grief over political events and expulsion from one’s homeland that had already been memorized by many readers who had attended grammar school.<sup>141</sup> This sorrowful tone is used often throughout the expanded *Vox* for *ad status* sermons, descriptions of the Uprising, and the narration of Richard’s inadequacies. As the lamenting narrator rehearses the alienating conduct and events occurring on English soil, distress fills the patriot who has lost his country. In the concluding chapter of the original *Vox*, ‘John’ bemoans the ‘patria’ where he was born and to which he cleaves, even though his homeland’s downfall signals his own.<sup>142</sup> While Ovid survives in Tomis among those he considers barbaric, the Saints John, represented in Gower’s narrator, sadly survey the debased Britain to which they had granted patronage. Thus, Ovidian language correlates with ‘John’’s estrangement in apocalyptic England. As Gower will later declare in the Prologue to the *Visio Anglie*, in lines built upon a patchwork of Ovid’s poetry, ‘To write one’s country’s deeds is pious work. / I’ll write of tearful times, which I can mourn [...]’.<sup>143</sup>

138 Revelation 7.14.

139 Batkie, ‘The Sound of my Voice’, pp. 32–49.

140 On cento, see R. F. Yeager, ‘Did Gower Write Cento?’, in *John Gower: Recent Readings*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), pp. 113–32. Irvin discusses the tearfulness of Gower’s narrators that is often derived from Ovid’s *Heroides*, *Tristia*, or *Epistulae ex Ponto*. See Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), p. 37.

141 Ovid, *Epistulae ex Ponto*, ii.2.126 and iv.9.10, 14.41.

142 VC 7.24, l. 1295.

143 VA, Pro., ll. 30–31. As Carlson remarks in the Commentary to his edition, ‘The middle of the prologue (prol. 33–480) is built out of borrowings from Ovid’s poetry from exile [...]’: See Carlson, ed., ‘*John Gower*’, pp. 33–38.

Along with his call to tearful preaching, the final characteristic of the Johannine narrator that is established in and amplified upon from the *Vox*'s core is his status as a dreamer to whom the prophetic Word comes in visions. The penitential preaching of the entire poem comes to 'John' 'quasi sompninando' (as if in a dream), as he confirms in the final prose gloss. The disclosure that the poetic content derives from a series of visions first occurs in the Prologue to Book 2, along with the declaration of the title — *Vox Clamantis* — that gestures toward the Baptist.<sup>144</sup> 'John' claims the Evangelist's heightened visionary powers as a principle of the poem's invention, yet he modestly denies his own control of these powers. In the Prologue to Book 3, the narrator protests, 'I do not reach up to touch the celestial seat or seek to record the mysteries of the highest heaven. Instead, I write of modern maladies which the common voice in this land openly laments.'<sup>145</sup> According to Hamburger, St John was credited in the Middle Ages with 'a theology of vision' for entering heaven's doors, viewing the heavenly city, and foreseeing the eternal conquest of the Lamb.<sup>146</sup> In imitating the Evangelist, Gower takes pains to explain that his poetic visions come from God, whom A. J. Minnis identifies as the 'first cause' of the *Vox*, and express the 'plebis voce' (voice of the people).<sup>147</sup> In his mediated way, through the outcry of the people and grace of God, the *Vox*'s 'John' attains a small part of the Evangelist's vision and conveys expressions that well up in 'a man whom Christ's grace enriches'.<sup>148</sup> His voice expressing God's gifts, 'John', an embodiment of grace, looks to old books, both scriptures and Ovidian poems, for articulations of ineffable visions.<sup>149</sup> With all of the matter entering his thought through dreams and many of the expressions coming to him from Ovid and other sources, the narrator of the *Vox Clamantis* declares nothing on his own: his eyes are blind; his ears are deaf; his treasury is empty, except for a gift of language emanating directly from God, the authors through whom God has spoken before, and through the people.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>144</sup> See the prose gloss to the Prologue for VC 2. Also, see VC 2. Pro., ll. 80 and 83–84.

<sup>145</sup> VC, Prologue to Book 3, ll. 53–56: *Non ego sidereas affecto tangere sedes / Scribere nec summi mistica quero poli / Sed magis que vox communis ad extra / Plangit in hac terra; scribo moderna mala.*

<sup>146</sup> Hamburger, *St John the Divine*, p. 18.

<sup>147</sup> VC, Prose gloss to the Prologue to Book 2. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, pp. 172–77.

<sup>148</sup> VC, Prologue to Book 2, l. 67: *Gracia quem Christi ditat, non indiget ille.*

<sup>149</sup> Bruce Harbert analyses the percentage of lines in the VC that derive from Ovid. See Bruce Harbert, 'Lessons from the Great Clerk', pp. 83–97. Harbert detects few Ovidian lines in parts satirizing the clergy and only 2 per cent of the lines in Book 3 on criticisms of the legal profession. Charging the knights with lust in Book 5, there is an uptick to 7 per cent of lines from *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Remedia Amoris*.

<sup>150</sup> VC, Prologue to Book 2, ll. 64 and 53. The opening of the Prologue insists that the narrator calls upon no muse but God.

Among its complex set of mediations, the original *Vox Clamantis* ends with a terrifying dream that makes the *Visio Anglie* such an appropriate new introduction. The original poem climaxes in Nebuchadnezzar's nightmare of the statue in the Book of Daniel, an Old Testament prophet whose tone and imagery was sometimes appropriated by the Evangelist. In Daniel 2, the prophet interprets Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a man formed by four metals: the gold head symbolizes the king himself, while the silver arms, bronze torso, iron legs, and mixed iron and clay feet represent the moral decline of kingdoms to come, in other words, civilizations trending toward the Apocalypse. By identifying the different ages according to declining levels of precious metal, Gower interprets the statue according to both Daniel's and Ovid's understanding, the latter having celebrated a Golden Age in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>151</sup> In Nebuchadnezzar's vision, a stone cut by no human hand descends to crush the statue's feet and shatter the whole. At this time, God establishes a kingdom that will have no end. 'John' opens the *Vox's* Book 7 with a discussion of Nebuchadnezzar's statue, explaining the human failings that contribute to this age of iron and clay, and inserting a dream within the larger visionary framework of the poem. The mediation of yet another kind of visionary perception, Kurt Olsson explains, creates a frightening disruption in the human concept of time as the disintegrated statue prompts 'John' to preach from Genesis, where the unrealized promise and purpose of humanity is presented, and from Revelation, where the final judgement falls.<sup>152</sup> Prompted by Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the structure of Book 7 swings from the failures of a contemporary society that is harder than iron in its avarice and softer than clay in its carnal flesh to ecstatic praises of the God who established creation to lamentations for imminent punishments. The nonlinear narrative imitates God's eternity, while the penitential preacher heralds God's warnings. Under these circumstances, Olsson observes, the narrator's rhetoric becomes increasingly 'impassioned' as it invokes the 'verba timenda dei' (words of God that must be feared) and attempts to shepherd the reader away from the gates of hell and toward a second paradise.<sup>153</sup> After the straightforward and strident accusations against the estates in books three through six, Gower begins to foment terror in Book 7 with pointed questions to the

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151 See Harbert, 'Lessons from the Great Clerk', pp. 83–97. In representing the world in decline, Gower aligns *Metamorphoses* on the Golden Age (1. 89–112) with the Book of Daniel and the Statue of Nebuchadnezzar (2. 31–45). Gower brings the statue into Book 7 of VC. However, where Daniel identifies his own time as the Age of Gold, Gower sees the Golden Age as being long past, as Ovid does (5–8). Ovid thinks of his own time as the Age of Iron, hard by the Age of Clay. According to Harbert, 'Here Gower has used Ovid to help him reinterpret scripture' (p. 84).

152 Olsson, 'John Gower's *Vox Clamantis*', p. 156.

153 Olsson, 'John Gower's *Vox Clamantis*', l. 1152.

sinner — ‘Answer me, you proud man!’ — and lamentations for that sinner’s two-part death, the horrors of the body’s decay and the soul’s eternal exile.<sup>154</sup>

## ‘John’ Opens and Closes the Apocalypse Book

Gower appended an account of another horrific dream to the beginning of the *Vox Clamantis* after the seemingly apocalyptic events of 13–16 June 1381 when lower class rebels from Kent and Essex invaded London. Identifying with the ruling classes and viewing the Uprising as a catastrophe, Gower perceived the incursion in which the Archbishop of Canterbury was executed, the Savoy Palace burned, and the city overrun with marauders as just one more sign of the advance of the Antichrist. Gower sews the *Visio Anglie* to the front of the *Vox* by establishing connections in the prose glosses and maintaining a similarly grieving and visionary narrator. Casting the historical events of the Uprising in a literary dreamscape, the *Visio* includes a rhetorical *descriptio* of London in springtime, a beast fable involving animalistic rebels, and a Tower-like image of the ship of state. The dream vision expressed through a cento of Ovidian verse features ‘John’s’ terrified wanderings through the Uprising’s catastrophes, his denunciations of his own and the peasants’ wickedness, and his futile attempts to escape. Although acceptance of God’s mysterious purposes eventually alleviates some of the narrator’s torment, the *Visio Anglie* leaves the reader to absorb the iniquities that are preached in the rest of the *Vox Clamantis* and to view Ricardian England as an apocalyptic landscape.

In composing the *Vox*’s new introduction, Gower remained mindful of the possibilities for a Johannine narrator to guide the English reader, and especially Richard, through what seemed to be an apocalyptic event involving loss of life, property, and the common trust in law and order. Like Revelation, the *Visio Anglie* claims to be a Johannine prophecy of foreordained events, although the Uprising that it describes has already taken place. The voice of ‘John’ projects even more loudly in the *Visio Anglie*, the *Vox*’s new introductory book. Gower intensifies the Johannine ethos by imitating the Evangelist’s authorship, setting part of the *Visio*’s scene at the house of the ‘Baptist’, and contrasting the motives of ‘John’ from those of John Ball.

Amplifying the sense of sadness first conveyed in the core of the poem, the Prologue to the *Visio* is, in Maria Wickert’s estimation, ‘tear-soaked’ in its borrowings from Ovid’s *Tristia*, a sorrow conforming to the crying

<sup>154</sup> See especially VC 7. 16, l. 863: *O michi responde, fert quid tibi pompa, superbe* [...]. Also, VC 7.19.

'John' in the *Vox's* estates satire.<sup>155</sup> The elegiac meter for the *Visio* supports the sounds of sorrow, with emotional words in the stressed position.<sup>156</sup> As 'John' himself says in the Prologue, 'The style is suited to the tale it tells', and it is also suited to the role of the Evangelist, who in Revelation insists: 'I am your brother and share your sufferings, your kingdom and all you endure'.<sup>157</sup> The narrator of the *Visio* not only continues the *Vox's* tones of grief for himself and the kingdom of England, but also the claims to visionary experience, the Prologue to the *Visio* announcing that 'John' will sorrowfully report what has been seen in a dream. Gower attaches this surreal narrative of disaster to the front of Book 2, no longer the entire poem's introduction, with a new prose headnote explaining that since the narrator has awakened from the apocalyptic dream of the *Visio*, he will continue to write about what he has seen while dreaming. Dreams within dreams, the vision of London's destruction culminating in that of all civilizations in Nebuchadnezzar's statue, apocalyptic allusion upon apocalyptic allusion — these manifest the guidance of John of Patmos, for which the narrator prays in the *Visio's* Prologue.

Imitating the composition strategies of the Evangelist in the *Visio*, Gower, like St John, 'is visibly present as both author and protagonist in the dramatic disclosure of his visions'.<sup>158</sup> The poet chronicles his terrified wanderings during the events of the Uprising, and again, like St John of Revelation, is both an observer of and an emotionally engaged participant in an apocalypse.<sup>159</sup> The *vita* of St John is often depicted through both text and art in English Apocalypse books as a context for the visions of Revelation, and the disrupted life of 'John' lends anxiety and horror to the *Visio* of the Uprising.<sup>160</sup> Suzanne Lewis's comments concerning the reception of English Apocalypse books could well have been written about Gower's *Visio*: 'As the Apocalypse is perceived by the medieval reader as embedded within the matrix of John's life experience, the text becomes a pilgrim's account, an interior journey into the future and beyond time'.<sup>161</sup> Commanded by God to write down his dream concerning the rebellion,

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<sup>155</sup> Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, pp. 22–23. See also, Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, p. 36.

<sup>156</sup> Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, p. 23.

<sup>157</sup> VA, Prologue, ll. 33–34: *Flebilis vt noster status est, ita flebile carmen, / Materie scripto conueniente sue*. The Evangelist's statement on brotherhood is at Revelation 1.9.

<sup>158</sup> Lewis, *Reading Images*, p. 19.

<sup>159</sup> Lewis, *Reading Images*, p. 20.

<sup>160</sup> For Apocalypse books that bracket the visions of Revelation with text and images concerning the Evangelist's life, see, for instance, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. D.4.17, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, London, British Library MS Additional 35166, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>. On the folios noted, the Evangelist's voyage to Patmos is offered as an introduction to the saint's visionary experience.

<sup>161</sup> Lewis, *Reading Images*, p. 32.

'John', like the Evangelist, 'validate[s] his visions in the written record by re-enacting his seeing and hearing for the reader'.<sup>162</sup> This seeing and hearing often takes place in liminal spaces. In Lewis's estimation,

By virtue of [the Evangelist's] extraordinary ability to move from one realm to another by shifting his position back and forth, within and outside the frame, between the world of the reader (text) and the world of the vision (image), [the Evangelist] becomes a complex transgressive figure.<sup>163</sup>

By aligning his authorial approach to the *Visio* even more closely with John of Patmos, Gower counters the rebels' transgressions with the boundary crossings of his Johannine narrator. In order to compose his vision, 'John' crosses from dreaming to waking, city to wilderness, land to sea, Ovidian poetry to current events.

Several episodes in the *Visio*, under the direction of John of Patmos, mirror those of Revelation. In Revelation 5. 2–5, the Evangelist is distressed that no one seems worthy to open the book and break its seven seals. He weeps, and the Elder tells him not to worry: Jesus will be able to accomplish this feat. Similarly, in a scene that Andrew Galloway believes also invokes the Baptist and Boethius, the *Visio*'s narrator is comforted by Lady Wisdom. Her appearance amidst his suffering world and her words of philosophical encouragement recall both Sophia from the *Consolation of Philosophy* and 'the descent of the *verbum Dei* on John's namesake, John the Baptist (Luke 3. 2) [...]'.<sup>164</sup> Additionally, in Revelation 6. 9–17, with the breaking of the sixth seal and the rumbling of an earthquake in which buildings crumble and people rush to hide in caves, Gower had a template for the escape of the upper classes and of his narrator to the wilderness as London falls. Unable to fight or lead others in this maelstrom, the 'noble flees and wanders, but can find / No safety in the woods [...]. The ditch is his bed'.<sup>165</sup> 'John' himself 'fled native homes, but shrank at caves, / Yet bore that evil to avoid a worse'.<sup>166</sup> With the ruling classes seeking asylum in nature, they ironically suffer the plagues spread by perversions among God's creatures: frogs and flies that recall the locusts of Revelation 9. 1–12, the peasant-beasts who are like the army of beasts, and the two sea monsters that attack the Tower imitating Revelation's great beast from

162 Lewis, *Reading Images*, p. 20.

163 Lewis, *Reading Images*, p. 21.

164 Andrew Galloway, 'Gower in his Most Learned Role and the Peasants' Revolt of 1381', *Mediaevalia*, 16 (1993 [for 1990]), 340. VA 16, ll. 1543–52.

165 VA 15, ll. 1199–1200: *Diffugit ingenuus vagus, et nec menibus vrbis / Aut nemorum latebris fert loca tuta satis*. VA 15, l. 1205: *Vir cubat in puteis; latebras magis optat Auerni [...]*.

166 VA 16, ll. 1399–1400: *Si qua parte michi magis expediens foret ire, / Perstet<it> in media pes michi sepe via*.

the sea.<sup>167</sup> The latter threat represents an English imagery of an island apocalypse, which only the Baptist's call to repentance can waylay.

After the Uprising, Gower saw new reason to enhance the Evangelist's presence in the *Vox Clamantis* and to speak out boldly as the Baptist, both Saints John being supporters of the English monarchy. In addition, Gower hoped to distance himself from another rhetorically powerful John: John Ball, clerical leader of the rebels. Ball, an open air preacher in the Lollard vein, had been excommunicated in 1366 and released from prison by the rebels on their way into London, his oratory having spoken to their desires for a respectable identity and fair treatment. As Sylvia Federico has suggested, the addition of the *Visio Anglie* to the *Vox* may have been necessary for Gower to clarify that the critiques launched against all the estates in the body of the poem did not arise from treasonous motives such as those imputed to the rebels, but instead from the *vox* of the Baptist, the king's own patron saint.<sup>168</sup>

One way that Gower aligns the Forerunner's outcries with the ruling classes' sufferings is to point out that the Baptist's own 'dwelling', the Priory of St John of Jerusalem at Clerkenwell, was attacked by the rebels. The *Visio's* narrator remarks, 'The Baptist's house, its bridegroom gone, now falls / By sword: the flames reduced it into ash.'<sup>169</sup> Just prior to this lament, the narrator describes the burning of Lancaster's Savoy Palace: John of Gaunt, then a beloved uncle to King Richard, receives the same horrifying treatment as the residents of the Baptist's priory.<sup>170</sup> Patron to the ruling classes and violated like them, the Baptist-like narrator of the *Visio* laments because the 'bridegroom [is] gone', a reference to the Gospel of John 3. 27–30 in which the Baptist insists that Jesus, not himself, is the true spouse of messianic fulfilment:

167 Revelation 9. 17–31; 13. 1–2.

168 Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 16.

169 VA 13, ll. 931–32: *Baptistque domus, sponso viduata, per ensem / Corruit, et flammis mox fuit illa cinis*. David Carlson reads 'Baptistque domus' in these lines to mean John of Gaunt's house, since the burning of the Savoy Palace is described in the previous verse and since Gaunt shared the Baptist's first name. See Carlson, ed., *John Gower*, p. 198, pp. 929–31. This reading, however, does not accord with Gower's emphasis on the sanctity of the Baptist's dwelling, on its 'holy halls' and 'pious lights' (ll. 933–34), features better fitting a priory. Having just lamented the burning of the Savoy, Gower uses the enclitic 'que' to show that with the Baptist's house, he is referring to one more building in a list of those destroyed. On the passage's reference to St John of Jerusalem at Clerkenwell, see Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher*, pp. 172–73. The Priory of St John of Jerusalem was a Norman foundation of the Monastic Order of the Knights Hospitallers. The Knights lived according to Augustinian rule.

170 For the burning of the Savoy Palace, see VA, ll. 929–30.



John answered and said, 'A man can receive nothing  
 unless it has been given him from heaven.  
 You yourselves are my witnesses that I said,  
 "I am not the Christ", but, "I have been sent ahead of Him".  
 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend  
 of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him  
 rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.  
 So this joy of mine has been made full.'

John the Baptist, full of grace as his name implies, has not been gifted, nevertheless, with the messiah's role. According to the Baptist's own declaration in the Gospel of John, the Forerunner is the friend of the bridegroom, Christ, who in Gower's lines has abandoned the priory at Clerkenwell and indeed all London. Although the biblical Baptist speaks of joy in hearing the bridegroom's voice fulfil the messianic mission, the *Visio's* narrator underscores the weeping, misery, and terror of the priory's servants in the absence of either earthly or heavenly saviour.<sup>171</sup> By mingling his sorrowful *vox clamantis* with the tears of the good servants ministering to St John of Jerusalem, Gower sharply contrasts the pious, obedient residents of St John's with the 'bad' servants breaking out of Essex and Kent, and he clarifies that the major Latin poem's satire against the estates is meant not as a show of support for the rebels' demands or a criticism of Richard's monarchical rule, but instead as a spiritual purgative for England and a preparation for God's judgement.

To separate his own Johannine ethos further from that of the rebels, Gower repudiates John Ball, Wat Tyler, and what the poet regarded as a violent and inhumane horde. It was particularly important to oppose Ball who, in Gower's estimation, was no great prophet and did not deserve his first name. In a letter entreating the peasants in Essex to unify against oppression, Ball anonymizes the name John by addressing the workers as 'Johan the Mullere' and 'Johan Cartere' or even 'Johan Nameles' ('John Doe').<sup>172</sup> In contrast to Ball, who imagines 'Johan' as a faceless if equal and communal rebel force, Gower insists on the individuated gifts meted out to the spiritually obedient Baptist and Evangelist by divine grace, gifts of Christian oratory and authorship that Gower appropriates. Whether or not Gower was aware of Ball's epistolary summons and its levelling use of the name 'John', Gower refuses to call the rebel by his first name. In the *Visio Anglie*, referring to Ball by only the last name, Gower writes: '*Balle propheta docte, quem spiritus ante malignus / Edocuitque sua tunc fuit*

<sup>171</sup> VA, ll. 935–36.

<sup>172</sup> James M. Dean, ed., "The Letter of John Ball (Royal MS)" <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-letter-of-john-ball-royal-manuscript>>. See Tauno F. Mustanoja, 'The Suggestive Use', p. 57.

alta scola [...]. (Ball was the preacher, the prophet and teacher, inspired by a spirit of hell, / And every fool was advanced in his school, to be taught as the devil thought well [...]).<sup>173</sup> Here, 'John' is not an affix of 'Balle'; grace does not attend his preaching, prophecy, and instruction. Ball, though occupying the same roles as the Baptist and Evangelist, delivers the devil's oratory, and Gower, wishing to invest his own sermonic words with the grace received by the Baptist and Evangelist, rejects Ball's membership in the spiritual community of John.

In the *Visio*, Gower contrasts his Johannine ethos and rhetorical mastery with John Ball's and other rebels' wicked and inarticulate speech. While Ball possessed clerical training and oratorical powers that Gower wished to demonize, Wat Tyler, the peasant leader among peasants, is depicted as an animal with less than human enunciation. Early in the *Visio* he is 'a boar that hailed from Kent', a fire-breathing monster among the other pigs who defile their masters' houses.<sup>174</sup> Later, after all the rebels — 'wild beasts' — have assembled, Tyler appears as a jay who can squawk 'watte' as English jays do.<sup>175</sup> This jay, 'well-versed in rhetoric', nevertheless delivers an ignoble oration against honour and virtue with '[g]ruff voice, fierce face' and a countenance looking like 'death', his demeanour a contradiction of common advice concerning rhetorical delivery.<sup>176</sup> His parodic battle speech to propel the multitude to London's destruction produces a hellish din, none of this cacophony resembling the plain spiritual eloquence of 'John', who speaks in unrhymed elegiac distiches and remasters the literature of canonical authors. As Lynn Arner remarks, 'the text repeatedly stages [the peasants'] inability to issue much more than unintelligible noises', a failing, she notes, that Gower characterizes as a lack of self-control.<sup>177</sup> Their inarticulate vocalizations burst forth from bodies with hypocoristic names such as 'Simkin' and 'Gibbe' that cannot be controlled by Latin syntax. As a result, Steven Justice has called Gower's peasants 'undiscursive', and Emily Steiner points out 'the historiographical problem posed by plebeian names' that do not belong in official documents.<sup>178</sup> In Gower's derogatory description, neither the peasants' names nor their

173 VA, ll. 793–94. Emphasis mine.

174 VA 4, l. 321: *Inter eos aper vnus erat quem <K> ancia duxit*. Gower remixes the Calydonian boar hunt scene from *Metamorphoses* 8. 260–546. Carlson p. 185, n. on ll. 321–48.

175 VA 9, ll. 679–81: *Copia dum tanta monstrorum more ferarum / Extitit vnita, sicut arena maris, / Graeculus vnus erat edoctus in arte loquendi [...]*. Gower notes in the gloss of l. 679 that the jay is 'commonly known as Wat': *graculus auis, anglice a Geay, qui vulgariter vocatur Watte [...]*.

176 VA, l. 687: *Vox fer, trux vultus, verissimus mortis ymago*.

177 Lynn Arner, 'Civility and Gower's *Visio Anglie*', *Accessus* 1.1 (2013): <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/accessus/vol1/iss1/5/>>.

178 Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 212; Steiner, 'Naming and Allegory', p. 271.

emotions may be contained — and their dominant emotion is anger, difficult to harness in civilized speech and even harder to shape into a reasonable case.<sup>179</sup> Arner locates Gower's representation of the inarticulate masses in the tradition of Cicero's *De inventione* in which rhetoric is the foundation of civilization; inversely, in the *Visio Anglie*, lack of civility is the cause of rhetoric's devolution.<sup>180</sup>

In the *Visio* 'John' seeks to demonstrate civility and piety in the service of Richard, whom he still strongly supports in the aftermath of the Uprising and names in the very first line of the first canto. To reverse social, spiritual, and linguistic decay such as is reflected in the peasants' actions and speech, as well as in the statue of Nebuchadnezzar's vision at the conclusion of the *Vox*, Gower, as Andrew Galloway has demonstrated, develops an exceptionally learned voice for the *Visio*, one that reflects the classical and religious education of the upper classes and the proper qualifications to speak to the king.<sup>181</sup> The mediating strategies of dream vision, and various modesty *topoi* are still present, but 'John' now steps forward with more apocalyptic descriptions in an increased number of Ovid's lines.<sup>182</sup> By doing so, he conflates the master theologian and patron of Edward the Confessor with a master of the classics and appropriates the authority inherent in this conflation. Constructing an Ovidian, educated 'John', Gower could be compared to Beryl Smalley's 'classicizing friars': Dominicans like Nicholas Trevet, or Franciscans like Roger Bacon, Walter of Wimborne, and John of Wales, or especially Robert Holcot, whose early fourteenth-century *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets* deploys ancient writings to interpret the dictates of Judeo-Christian prophets.<sup>183</sup> Kimberly A. Rivers sees Bersuire's *Ovidius Moralizatus* in this tradition, and certainly Gower's Ovidian cento for the *Visio* attempts something similar to the moralized Ovids, though more indirect and allusive.<sup>184</sup> As Eve Salisbury remarks, amidst the complexity of the *Visio*'s cento, Gower can still 'speak plainly while at the same time animating voices from classical

179 Arner, 'Civility', p. 14.

180 Arner, 'Civility', pp. 14–17.

181 On the display of erudition in the VA, see Andrew Galloway, 'Gower in His Most Learned Role', pp. 329–47.

182 G. C. Macaulay, Eric W. Stockton, and John H. Fisher chart Gower's deep dependence upon Ovid in the VA. In addition to borrowing from Ovid's poems, the cento is also constructed by Peter Riga's *Aurora*, Nigel Wireker's *Speculum Stultorum*, and Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon*. Fisher concludes that out of 2150 lines in the VA, 247 are from Ovid. See Eric W. Stockton, Introduction, *The Major Latin Works of John Gower* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), pp. 26–29; Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher*, p. 150.

183 Holcot is discussed by Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), p. 142; Kimberly A. Rivers, *Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice: Memory, Images, and Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 222–27.

184 Rivers, *Preaching the Memory*, pp. 255–71.

and scriptural texts of the past'.<sup>185</sup> This high level of intellectual play with biblical and classical discursive models creates, for Matthew W. Irvin, a persona that rises above the 'philosophically foolish [...] *vox populi*' that, as we have seen, sometimes mediates God's truths to the dreaming poet.<sup>186</sup> Philosopher, preacher, and prophet, as well as poet, 'John' possesses the divine truth and authority to comment upon the recent insurrection in England and show his monarch the hand of the Antichrist in it.

In this concentrated, intellectual melding of Johannine vision with Ovidian mythology, Gower draws especially deeply from the *Metamorphoses*. In fact, lines from the *Metamorphoses* make up 140 of the *Visio*'s 2,150 verses, far exceeding Gower's use of Ovid's other poems.<sup>187</sup> As 'John' represents a fertile but fragile England, the Ovidian cento reminds of the concomitant creation and destruction of both gods and earthly species in the *Metamorphoses*, with the formation of the world out of chaos, the rise of the gods, the extinction of the first humans after a great flood, the birth of new species, and the continual transformation of bodies.<sup>188</sup> In the *Visio* 'John' presents a creation constantly churning with the birth of new forms, the transformation of bodies, and the annihilation of existing matter as he describes a fresh springtime in England, proceeds to the Uprising in which peasants exchange their human forms with dogs, pigs, asses, and cows, and chronicles the destruction of London's institutions. This narrative trajectory is expressed in Ovidian diction, structured and guided by the spiritual vision of the Evangelist, who describes creation in the opening of the Gospel of John ('In the beginning was the Word') and this world's obliteration in Revelation. Gower links divine creation / destruction to poetic invention, Maura Nolan's analysis shows, by citing lines from Ovid that both compose and deconstruct the *Visio*'s narrative line.<sup>189</sup> Both cosmic and poetic invention depend upon reversal and decay; having suffered and recorded so much, the *Visio*'s narrator must acknowledge that even after trumpeting a warning about what looked to be the end of English civilization, the voice of 'John' seems to waft away on the sea breezes. Grateful that God has freed him from one apocalyptic event, 'John' remains anxious because, despite the horrors of the Uprising, England still does not know 'how to render proper prayers to God'.<sup>190</sup> Following the Saints John, the

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185 Salisbury, 'Violence and the Sacrificial Poet', p. 128.

186 Irvin, *Politics and Personae*, p. 34.

187 Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher*, p. 150. Here, Fisher notes that beyond the 140 lines from the *Metamorphoses*, Gower uses 30 from *Fasti*, 29 from *Ex Ponto*, 25 from *Heroides*, 9 from *Ars amatoria*, 8 from *Amores*, and 6 from *Remedia Amoris* in the VA.

188 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Anthony S. Kline, Internet Classics Archive, <<http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Ovhome.htm>>.

189 Nolan, 'The Poetics of Catastrophe', pp. 113–33.

190 VA 21, ll. 2.125–26: *O mea si tellus, quam non absorbit equor, / Debita sciret eo reddere vota deo!*

*Visio*'s narrator may have sounded the alarm, but for all the discussion of bodily and spiritual transformation and for all the authority invested in his Ovidian lines, he had not been able to convert English souls.

With the *Visio*'s uncertain conclusion, the narrative continues on into the core of the *Vox*, implying the hope that although England did not seek God's guidance after the Uprising, the country might do so after the *Vox*'s excoriation of the wicked estates, appeals to Richard II, and presentation of the end of nations in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. After the addition of the *Visio* as a new introduction, the Baptist-like preaching to the estates in Books 3–6 of the *Vox* attempts to prepare the reader for the next apocalyptic catastrophe to wash upon England's shores. Book 7, with its representation of Nebuchadnezzar's statue, warns that all civilizations must eventually fall, and in the years following the Uprising events such as Richard's struggles with the City of London, the Merciless Parliament, and the exile of Henry Derby, to name a few, seemed to Gower the signs of decline.

Nearly two decades after the Uprising and the affixation of the *Visio* to the *Vox*, Gower appends a new conclusion continuing the story of England's salvation history in light of these events: the *Cronica Tripartita* relating the sorrows of the realm under Richard II and new joys emerging from the accession of Henry IV, whose occupation of the throne is likened to the advent of Christ. Long after the medieval poet's initial disappointment with Ricardian rule and after Richard's death, Gower attached the *Cronica Tripartita*, a poem sounding the judgements of God upon England, as an historically updated ending to the *Vox*. The *Cronica* provides a verse history of Richard's depredations and praises the Lancastrian accession to the throne as if Henry IV were Christ at the Second Coming. As David Carlson remarks, 'Though the *Cronica* [unlike the *Visio*] had separate circulation, it survives predominantly as a kind of coda insinuating itself at the end of the greater *Vox clamantis*, in four of the five manuscripts that transmit it.'<sup>191</sup> Through the *Visio Anglie* and the *Cronica Tripartita*, Gower bracketed his major Latin poem with many-layered allusions to the Evangelist's authorship and thus underscored the apostle's influence over the longer poem's ethos. The *Visio* opens with a request for the Evangelist's guidance, and the *Cronica* deploys apocalyptic allegories such as the Revelator saw in his vision on Patmos.

While in the *Visio* and the core of the *Vox* history and a providential plan are evolving, in the *Cronica* Gower's perspective on the past has gelled, limiting the efficacy and purpose of the preacher-prophet's voice. History (as an aged 'John' understands it) seems to have finished: 'John'

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<sup>191</sup> Carlson, Introduction, p. 6.

only looks back to what has ‘now been told’.<sup>192</sup> As Arner remarks, ‘By positioning England at the end of history [...], the poem renders the past entirely static.’<sup>193</sup> Whereas in the *Visio* and *Vox* the narrator’s expressions capture both the Forerunner and the Revelator projecting ahead to future manifestations of Christ and the Antichrist in Britain, in the *Cronica* ‘John’ narrates events as if they are happening right before his eyes — but his Prologue cancels this sense of progression and futurity by announcing the climax to the already completed story. Revealing in the past perfect that Christ has cast Richard down (‘proiecit’) and raised Henry up (‘constituit’), ‘John’ presides over finished actions and is therefore unable to prophesy or even preach repentance in preparation for an advent.<sup>194</sup> In contrast, the history of the Uprising in the *Visio Anglie* is revealed as if ‘John’ had dreamed it beforehand; the poetic record of it is situated in an extended past beginning with Trojan founders of Britain, and linked to a continuum of English events expected to culminate in a Second Coming. The *Visio*’s vacillations in time and the threat of impending doom create, in Kurt Olsson’s words, a ‘dominant affectus’ of fear, which ‘John’, speaking in the gap between contemporary sin and future apocalyptic fulfilment, manipulates rhetorically.<sup>195</sup> In contrast, the *Cronica*’s steady progression to a foregone conclusion lifts the burden of agonizing suspense off the reader and fixes it on Richard: after Henry returns from exile in France, Richard becomes as a hare ‘transfixed with fear’ that scampers away to Ireland.<sup>196</sup> Like the Baptist, ‘John’ can deplore a monarch whom he compares to Herod, but since Henry IV has already overcome this new tetrarch, ‘John’ is not required to pave the way for his lord or suffer martyrdom. With Henry as king, ‘John’ expresses happiness and comfort that would have been quite unfamiliar to his saintly namesakes: ‘From prison’s gloom with R like Herod as our ward, / [Christ] brought us back to splendid kingdoms, quite restored’.<sup>197</sup>

Dream-vision gives way to the visionary quality of allegory in the *Cronica*. The narrator’s new position at the end of English time must be

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192 CrT, 3, l. 479: *Vt patet, est dicta* [...]. As with the VA, English translations of the CrT continue to come from Carlson, ed. and Rigg, trans., *John Gower*.

193 Lynn Arner, ‘History Lessons from the End of Time: Gower and the English Rising of 1381’, *Clio*, 31.3 (2002), 255. Arner’s remark reflects her reading of the VA, where she interprets the poet to be already advancing a foreordained and ‘static’ history. As this section of the chapter explains, I see the VA and VC as reflecting an unfolding history and the CrT as a conclusion to these texts that presents an unfolded past.

194 CrT, Prose gloss to the Prologue to Part One.

195 Olsson, ‘John Gower’s *Vox Clamantis*’, p. 146.

196 CrT, Part Three, ll. 160–61: *Tunc rex Ricardus lepus est et non leopardus; / Quem timor astrinxit, alibi sua robora finxit.*

197 The CrT Part Three, ll. 9–10: *R tunc custodis, quasi sit regnantis Herodis, / Gracius eduxit et ad inclita regna reduxit.*

expressed with sources and forms quite different from those in the *Visio* and *Vox*. The *Cronica* is not a dream vision, but literary historiography; it is not taken from Ovidian poetry representing creation in flux or the grief of exile, but instead from a single Latin source with a French title that constituted Lancastrian propaganda: *Record et proces del renunciacion du roy Richard le second apres le conquest, et de lacceptacion de mesme la renunciacion, ensemblement oue la deposicion de mesme le roy Richard*.<sup>198</sup> As a result, the Baptist's voice under the Evangelist's direction, itself unsuited for historical records, lowers its tone. In addition to using a simpler, linear source for the *Cronica*, Gower arranges his material in a more basic structure. The *Cronica* is *tripertita* (tripartite) to represent the work of earth, hell, and heaven: the efforts of the Lancastrian peers (or Lords Appellant) in seeking peace and good governance during Richard's rule, the king's hellish revenge, and his deposition so that a heaven-sent monarch might arise. In this truncation of the Apocalypse's structure, with its serial visions and revelations through the breaking of seals, Henry, who is revealed to be Christ's ambassador in England, is shortly 'raised above in glory'.<sup>199</sup> Whereas the construction of the *Visio-Vox* inserts a space where 'John' can inject sermons or visions, the *Cronica*'s form demarcates strong boundaries between rudimentary principles like good versus evil — God's anointed (Henry IV and the Appellants) versus the minions of hell (Richard II and his supporters) — and by highlighting such a strong contrast, obviates moral argument. Even the *Cronica*'s verse form — leonine hexameters, with disyllabic rhyme both at the caesura and the end of the line — presses for quick, uncomplicated endings and emphasizes rhymed closure. In contrast to the *Visio*'s unrhymed elegiac couplets that copy the meter of Ovid's *Heroides* and *Tristia* and propel the reader forward into the narrative, the *Cronica*'s leonines encourage end-stops, set conclusions, and synopses.<sup>200</sup> This impulse toward completion and hindsight offers few meaningful channels for the prophet or penitential preacher: all is always already accomplished by God. The *Cronica* represents, then, Gower's consistent ownership of a Johannine ethos, but also a lack of confidence in its continued efficacy, since it did not curtail the turmoil of Richard's reign and now cannot see farther than Henry's.

The rhetorical features of the *Cronica* that most recall the Johannine ethos of the *Visio* and *Vox* are the narrator's tears and the beast allegory, with its attendant focus on names. With the grieving *vox* and apocalyptic images of animals and birds, the *Cronica* maintains the shells of the Baptist's persona and Evangelist's authorial vision, without forging into

198 Carlson, Introduction, p. 14.

199 CrT, Prose gloss to the Prologue: *et pium Henricum omni dileccione gratissimum cum Gloria sublimari constituit*.

200 On the meter of these poems, see Carlson, Introduction, pp. 17–18.

penitential advice or prophetic warning. The *vox clamantis* of the Baptist-narrator, whose pen drips with tears in order to express the sorrow of the English people, surfaces in the *Cronica's* Part Two when Richard is tormenting the Appellants, but quickly fades away when Richard becomes lachrymose in Part Three. The Appellants, from the beginning of the *Cronica*, are labelled according to a Revelation-like beast allegory reflecting their heraldry: Thomas, duke of Gloucester is called the Swan; Richard, earl of Arundel, the horse; Thomas, earl of Warwick the bear. According to Helen Barr, the *Cronica's* heraldic allegory establishes the text as prophetic, and certainly it deploys the *modus prophetarum*, whose figures of speech overlay assertions and identities with mystery.<sup>201</sup> However, there is not much true mystery here: Gower supplies the key to the allegory in the prose gloss to Part One. Whereas in the *Visio* the beast allegory describing the peasants includes monsters with multiple significations — for instance cattle that behave like lions, leopards and bears — in the *Cronica* the allegory has a neat, mathematical quality: Gloucester = Swan; Arundel = Horse; Warwick = Bear. The appellations arising from natural emblems inform the plot (for instance, the Bear can be baited into delivering a false confession) and remind of apocalyptic animal imagery, but signify weakly.<sup>202</sup> Although swans, for instance, were said in medieval bestiaries to sing sweetly before death, the image of the martyred Swan, crushed in Calais does no more to expose the horrors of Richard's revenge than to portray an innocent man ambushed and cruelly killed.<sup>203</sup>

The most forceful signifiers in the *Cronica's* allegory are put into play when 'John' taps into traditions associated directly with his saintly namesakes. Richard II, who embodies the abuses of power that the Baptist preached against in Herod, represents a host of biblical antitypes of Christ (Pharaoh, Herod, the Devil). Henry IV, offering Christ-like judgement, 'winnows chaff from grain', just as John the Baptist claimed that Jesus would.<sup>204</sup> As the Baptist says about Jesus in Matthew 3. 12: 'His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.' Thus, hell's fire will consume the English who stood against the country's good and Henry, according to the *Cronica*, foreordained by God to return from exile, repossess his fortune, vanquish Richard, and rise to the throne. While awaiting this fruition in the *Cronica*, 'John' comments upon

201 Helen Barr, *Socioliterary Practice in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 72–73.

202 The 'Bear' is baited by the king's 'curs' in CrT, Part Two, ll. 159–65.

203 CrT, Part Two, ll. 96–98: *Cignum prostratum iugulant, quasi martirizatum. / Calisiis actum sceleris fuit hoc malefactum, / Regis precepto, iugulo qui gaudet adepto.*

204 Richard has an *induratum cor* (hard heart) like Pharaoh in CrT, Part One, l. 13; he is devilish *latitans quasi vulpis in agnum* (like fox in wait for lambs) in CrT, Part Two, l. 21; Henry IV *purgat ad horrea granum* (winnows chaff from grain) in CrT, Part Three, l. 251.



Richard's depredations in these Revelation-like lines: 'God many things permits, but when He terminates / All time, He'll surely show all things in their true state.'<sup>205</sup> The *Cronica*, for the most part, reveals things in their true state (as Gower sees them) from the beginning, and time seems to have been terminated since the Prologue. Despite his trenchant insights on the spiritual nature of the two kings, there is nothing more for 'John' to say.

### 'John' Steps Down in the *Confessio Amantis*

The *Confessio Amantis* reflects the process through which 'John' steps down from the podium of *ad status* preacher and prophetic herald; in other words, analysis of the long Middle English poem can explain how and why the robust Johannine narrator of the *Visio Anglie* and *Vox Clamantis* weakens around 1400 in the *Cronica Tripertita*. During the 1390s Gower composed and revised the Middle English masterpiece in which 'John' continues to admonish the estates for the good of England and amplify on themes connected to the Baptist and the Evangelist — themes of incest and visioning. However, in the *Confessio* 'John' comments explicitly upon the dwindling efficacy of his narrative voice and soon abandons it to showcase Genius's confession of the lover Amans. While 'John' continues in the poem's Prologue to play the roles of preacher and prophet, by the *Confessio*'s end he retreats to private meditations, with the implication that while he might continue to fulfil his namesakes' contemplative role, he will abandon preaching and make straight the way for another kind of rhetoric. Disappointed in the contemporary social order and Amans's pursuit of romantic love, 'John' slinks away from Venus's court to count his rosary beads for Richard's or for England's sake;<sup>206</sup> he thereby reverts to a cloistered type of the Marian devotee who concludes the narration of the *Mirour*, one who does not require a pulpit.

We might ask why Gower lost confidence in the Johannine ethos that he so urgently projected in the *Mirour de l'Omme*, *Visio Anglie*, and core of the *Vox Clamantis*. A partial answer might be that as he approached the end of his life, Gower felt it time to hush the voice of 'John'. And yet, nearly twenty years before his death and even a decade before Henry's accession and the full culmination of England's salvation history as Gower would know it, the poet began to dismantle his construction of 'John' in favour

<sup>205</sup> CrT, Part Three, ll. 122–23: *O quam plura sinit deus, et cum tempora finit, / Omnia tunc certe que sunt demonstrate aperte!*

<sup>206</sup> Like the VC, the CA underwent revisions reflecting Gower's increasing disappointment in Richard's rule. While the conclusion to the first version of the poem announces that 'John' will retreat to pray for Richard, later versions excise the monarch's name and focus on praying for England. See CA 8, ll. 2971–3053.

of a feminized eloquence through which Gower might more directly access the Word. Chapters Three and Six of *John Gower's Rhetoric* treat aspects of Marian rhetoric, initially theorized in the *Mirour*, that supersede Gower's Johannine discourses. In the *Confessio* exemplars of feminized speech complete a turn toward the rhetoric of divine womanhood. In the opening Latin head verse to the *Confessio's* Prologue, for instance, Gower invokes Carmentis, the female prophet who spread the Latin language to Italy, instead of calling upon the Saints John as muses.<sup>207</sup> Irvin refers to 'a crisis of masculine authority' in the end of the *Confessio*, where Amans has misplaced trust in Genius and Cupid to bring about the satisfaction of desire.<sup>208</sup> I would add to this perception that in both the first and final book of the Middle English poem, Gower loosens the mantle of his own masculinist Johannine authority so that Amans might kneel properly to Venus and eventually 'John' might bow to Mary — the Virgin who becomes the focus of his private prayers.

Indicating that the *Confessio* is a transitional poem for Gower's Johannine ethos, the Prologue seems to reintroduce 'John' in his traditional role as prophet inveighing against the state, church, and people.<sup>209</sup> He reproves the estates for their iniquities, as he had in the *Mirour* and *Vox*, and declares the imminence of the end of times by presenting the statue envisioned by Nebuchadnezzar, just as he had in the *Vox's* Book 7. Terror strikes again as the stone tumbles down to shatter the statue's clay feet and destroy all civilization. As in previous poems, 'John' turns from Daniel, who interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, to the Evangelist for understanding of apocalyptic visions:

Th'apostel writ unto ous alle  
And seith that upon ous is falle  
Th'ende of the world; so may we knowe,  
This ymage is nyh overthrowe,  
Be which this world was signified,  
That whilom was so magnefied,  
And now is old and fieble and vil,  
Full of meschief and of peril,

207 CA Pro., Latin verse i, ll. 1–4. For the importance of Carmentis to the CA, see Siân Echar, 'With Carmen's Help: Latin Authorities in the *Confessio Amantis*', *Studies in Philology*, 95 (1998), 1–40.

208 Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, p. 184.

209 'If, in the *Vox clamantis*, Gower portrayed himself as a preacher-prophet', Alastair J. Minnis remarks, 'in the *Confessio Amantis*, he assumed the role of the philosopher who was wise in the secular sciences of ethics and politics'. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, pp. 177. While Minnis's acute observation seems to obtain throughout the *Confessio*, especially in Book 7's discussion of 'Rethorique', Gower does begin the English poem with the preacher-prophet's narration.

And stant divided ek also  
 Lich to the feet that were so,  
 As I tolde of the statue above.<sup>210</sup>

The apostle cited in the opening to this passage, who writes about the end of the world in *ymages* similar to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, is John the Evangelist.<sup>211</sup> Here John's Revelation of the Second Coming and an establishment of heaven on earth provides a Christological context for the statue anthropomorphizing an ancient world order that is old and sick, with feet crumbling to the dust out of which the New Jerusalem will arise.

Regardless of the seeming similarity in Gower's biblical ethos and the familiar fear inspired by Nebuchadnezzar's dream, there are indications in the *Confessio's* Prologue that 'John' — as the Baptist had at the beginning of Jesus's mission — plans to retreat in the face of other divine voices. This retreat involves preaching at a distance from hearers who, in earlier poems, had formed his congregation. In contrast to the *Mirour* and *Vox*, the narrator of the *Confessio's* Prologue does not directly upbraid each audience in an *ad status* sermon, but instead refers to sinners in the third person as if they had already turned away. As a result, the audience for the *Confessio's* Prologue seems more circumscribed, dedicated to the few who will still listen, and the preacher seems less certain of his mission. Rulers, clergy, and commoners all come under strident attack, but rather than calling out to them in serial apostrophes as he had in the *Mirour* and *Vox* — 'O King', 'O Priest', 'O Merchant' — 'John' does not appeal to their consciences or implore them to repent but, rather, speaks as if their moral failings were a dismaying but foregone conclusion. This is not to characterize 'John' as fatalistic; the narrator cautions in the *Confessio's* Prologue as elsewhere against blaming fortune for the consequences of humanity's poor choices. However, in the *Confessio's* Prologue, 'John' is more at a loss for a leader who might better direct the people or a poetic voice that might heal sinful disunity. As R. F. Yeager has demonstrated, 'John' fixes on Arion and desires to imitate the peaceful songs of the harper from Ovid's *Fasti*,<sup>212</sup> but the narrator laments that Arion's skill seems beyond his grasp. 'John' is distanced from his congregation as well as the very qualities he would like to see in himself. Instead of deploying Ovidian lines in clear support of Johannine purposes, as he had done in the *Vox*, Gower gestures toward the Ovidian model of Arion to reveal the shortcomings of 'John'.

<sup>210</sup> CA Pro., ll. 881–91.

<sup>211</sup> Macaulay (2: 465) glosses 'Th'apostel' as Paul (1 Corinthians 10. 11–12), and Peck follows suit in his edition. John the Evangelist was referred to in many ways: as the beloved disciple, the divine, and an apostle. The Evangelist is a better candidate for a biblical author whose writings portrayed the end of the world.

<sup>212</sup> R. F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for a New Arion* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990).

Doubt concerning 'John' surfaces even in the representation of Nebuchadnezzar's statue, which is always already deconstructing. As we have just noted, the description of the statue in the *Confessio's* Prologue is framed by a reference to John the Evangelist and the Second Coming, yet like the crumbling statue itself, the prophetic locutions in this passage fragment as they degenerate into straightforward chronicle, much as we see in the *Cronica Tripertita*. The statue of the *Confessio's* Prologue receives much more historical explanation than it does in the *Vox*, and although the explication highlights the ways that Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled, the ensuing narrative of the ages of gold, silver, brass, steel, and earth plants the statue more in fourteenth-century views of the past than in the discourse of prophetic revelations. 'John' explains how the age of gold began in Babylon and ended with the slaying of Baltazar; how the age of silver extended from the reign of Darius to the conquests of Alexander to the Greek defeat of the Persians; how the Roman Empire dominated that of brass, and how Charlemagne protected the empire in the age of steel until the rise of the Lombards.<sup>213</sup> Since German control and consequent division of the territories, 'John' laments, Rome '[s]tant in ruine and in decas', an urban counterpart to the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.<sup>214</sup> The nations are now in the time of steel and clay, awaiting the crushing stone. Elliot Kendall argues that the rich historical context provided for the statue raises the volume on apocalypticism in the *Confessio's* Prologue, demonstrating how all civilizations are marching toward the end of time.<sup>215</sup> In the explication of the statue, however, 'John' is retreating from the admonitory preaching and the surreal blending of apocalyptic imagery with Ovidian lines that had characterized his voice in earlier poems. He rehearses the various metallurgical ages in a clear chronological order that is similar to the approach to Lancastrian triumph in the *Cronica*. Although he predictably mentions between the descriptions of each of the ages that his narrative reveals what Daniel foretold,<sup>216</sup> prophets are not historiographers and do not amplify on the concrete manifestations of the Word that they mediate.

Russell Peck observes in the narrator's analysis of the statue 'a subtle shift [...] from an apocalyptic voice to a penitential one as [Gower] shifts his biblical text from Daniel to Isaiah to imagine a more comfortable ending — a peaceable kingdom.'<sup>217</sup> A penitential voice derived from Isaiah

213 CA Pro., ll. 663–966.

214 CA Pro., l. 837.

215 Elliot Kendall, 'Saving History: Gower's Apocalyptic and the New Arion', in *John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation, and Tradition*, ed. by Elisabeth Dutton with John Hines and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), pp. 48–49.

216 Reminders that 'John' is explicating the prophecy of Daniel occur at CA, Pro., ll. 663, 823, 872, and 1039.

217 Peck, 'John Gower and the Book of Daniel', p. 174.

still reflects the Baptist as a model, but the emphasis has changed from the threat of final judgement to the promise of Christ's harmonic rule. The stone about to fall on the statue's toes represents 'an eschatological threat', but Gower then turns the reader's attention to the example of Arion, the soothing harper, and the possibility of cosmic concord.<sup>218</sup> In the Prologue's transition noted by Peck, 'John' still treats sin and God's judgement, but he prepares for the new focus on human desire in the *Confessio's* first book, where sin is regarded as an infraction against love and God's judgement as Cupid's determinations on lovers' suits.

In a variety of subtle moves in the *Confessio's* Prologue dislodging 'John' from his important role as prophet and preacher to the English estates, references to the Saints John do not always command centre stage, as they had done in the *Mirour* and *Vox*, but instead occupy the head verses, where they are couched in difficult Latin and available to the learned only, rather than deployed to move the general reader toward spiritual improvement. In the Prologue's Latin poem iii, in which the former glory of the church is compared to its contemporary decline, a gesture toward the Evangelist provides a complex allusion rather than a straightforward moral teaching. In this context, 'Moises vetus' (old Moses) and 'nouus ipse Iohannes' (the famous new man of John) represent the pillars of Hebraic and New Testament law that have begun to crumble in fourteenth-century Catholicism. The 'new man' is, of course, the Christ of John's gospel, which asserts: 'For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.'<sup>219</sup> That this grace and truth are dispensed through divine sacrifice is a major tenet of the Gospel of John, partly conveyed through the Beloved Disciple's representation of John the Baptist. While Moses ordered the sacrificial lamb to be eaten at the Passover, John the Baptist as characterized in the Gospel of John calls Jesus the lamb of God, and the gospel expands on this characterization by describing the Eucharist. Gower adopts the Evangelist's point of view once again in Prologue to the *Confessio Amantis* but encases it in a challenging Latin poem, where its effect will be more limited than pronouncements in the Middle English Prologue.

The weakening of the Johannine voice in the *Confessio's* Prologue leads to its silencing in the body of the poem. Gower admits in the *Confessio's* beginning that his attempts to speak in the Baptist's *vox* and arrange poetic material according to the Evangelist's vision have not borne adequate fruit. The poet must look to other mythologies, like that of Arion, and rhetorical strategies, like the Marian rhetoric we will study in the next chapter, to persuade readers to repent and work toward the ultimate *pax Christi*. Book

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<sup>218</sup> Peck, 'John Gower and the Book of Daniel', p. 175.

<sup>219</sup> John 1. 17.

1 opens with Gower's remarks on his shortcomings in crying out like the Baptist and envisioning celestial truths like the Evangelist:

I may noght strecche up to the hevene  
 Min hand, ne setten al in evene  
 This world, which evere is in balance:  
 It stant noght in my sufficance  
 So grete thinges to compasse,  
 Bot I mot lete it overpasse  
 And treten upon othre thinges.<sup>220</sup>

Unlike the Evangelist who, upon the commandment of the Spirit, crossed through an open door to see God's kingdom and receive the Lamb's wisdom, Gower anticlimactically admits his lack of 'sufficance' for spiritual travel or invocations.<sup>221</sup> 'John', a mere English author, has been unable to set a precarious world in balance, so he vows to change the 'stile' of his writing — a promise that Maura Nolan reads as an intention to emphasize the plain style.<sup>222</sup> Even were he to become the rhetorical equal of his saintly namesakes, like the Saints John, Gower might only gesture toward a future fulfilment of the Word. Therefore, he passes on to other things, namely tales of love, in which he temporarily exchanges the Evangelist's theological sight for worship of a blind god, Cupid.

Since 'John' the speaker of the Prologue transforms to Amans, the unrequited lover, the obligation to preach is removed from such a besotted figure and transferred to Genius, the priest of Venus. As Gower explains in a marginal gloss: 'Hic quasi in persona aliorum, quos amor alligat, fingens se auctor esse Amantem, varias eorum passiones variis huius libri distincconibus per singula scribere proponit' (Here, as if in the persona of others whom love enchains, the author, pretending himself to be a lover, proposes to write about each of the lover's passions in separate parts of this book). In addition, 'John' announces suddenly in Middle English that he, himself, is 'one of those' whom Cupid has overtaken.<sup>223</sup> This is a shocking declaration, given that much of the narrator's authority rests in

<sup>220</sup> CA 1. 1–7.

<sup>221</sup> Revelation 4. 1.

<sup>222</sup> As discussed in 'Gower's Rethorique', Helen Cooper coordinates Gower's many references to 'balance' with rhetorical strategies for evening out injustices. See Helen Cooper, "Peised Evene in the Balance": A Thematic and Rhetorical Topos in the *Confessio Amantis*, *Mediaevalia*, 16 (1993 [for 1990]), pp. 113–40. Gower declares that he will change the 'stile' of his 'writings' at CA 1, l. 8. Maura Nolan interprets this line to mean that Gower will emphasize the plain style, in 'Sensation and the Plain Style in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*' in *John Gower: Others and the Self*, ed. Russell A. Peck and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017) p. 121.

<sup>223</sup> The Latin gloss is at CA 1, l. 59; the Middle English announcement that Gower is 'one of those' lovers is at CA 1, l. 62.

his saintly namesakes' virginity and their intimacy with the Virgin Mary. At the same time that 'John' abandons his reputation as 'virgin of virgins', theological visioning ceases in favour of the dream-vision of medieval romance. Amans, weeping over an unsympathetic lady, emerges in a lover's fantasy, and for eight poetic books Genius, the priest of Venus, confesses or instructs him. Amans's pining over his unwilling beloved parodies that of 'John' in the *Vox*: the lover's tears are not for sinners at the end of time or England in its decline, but only for himself. Preaching the seven deadly sins against love in a series of sermoniac exempla, Genius attempts to restore Amans to integrity and reason — and to render the lover worthy, perhaps, of his beloved.

Becoming Amans, 'John' not only abandons previous claims to divine visioning and a preacher's authority, but he also modulates allusions to poetic and intellectual sources on which Genius relies for literary plots and cultural information. The *Confessio Amantis*, to adapt Andrew Galloway's characterization of the narrator in the *Vox*, does not present Gower in his 'most learned role', the role that placed the poet's reliance on the Evangelist in sharp relief.<sup>224</sup> While the *Vox Clamantis* offers a complex cento of Ovidian verses articulated by 'John', the *Confessio* does not challenge readers with allusions deeply submerged in the narrator's speech, but instead openly tells whole tales from the *Metamorphoses* on bodily transformations accompanying disasters in love relations. For instance, when Narcissus's erotic despair turns him to a flower in the *Confessio*'s Book 1 or Ceix's death results in his and Alceone's metamorphosis into birds in Book 4, Gower makes the same Ovidian point about concomitant creation and destruction that he made in the *Visio*, but he does so in a much more accessible and expansive narrative.<sup>225</sup> In the *Confessio*, Genius wears his learning lightly, despite the heavy weave of the fabrics we sampled in this book's previous chapter, and a wiser 'John' waits to emerge in the final book, after he has shaken off the foolishness of his amatory persona.<sup>226</sup>

The re-emergence of 'John', I have demonstrated elsewhere, depends upon the integration of Genius, a figure for the intellect, and Amans, a representative of the loving will, into one personality.<sup>227</sup> During the confession, Genius has guided Amans in the control of passions such as envy and anger that constitute the seven deadly sins against love, thereby moving

224 Galloway, 'Gower in His Most Learned Role', pp. 329–47.

225 Narcissus in CA 1. 2275–2398; Ceix and Alceone in CA 4. 2927–3186.

226 I have argued that Genius is an aspect of the narrator's persona and that it is only when Genius and Amans merge into one speaker — 'John Gower', as the narrator names himself in the end of the *Confessio* — that 'John' can be wise again. See Georgiana Donavin, 'Rhetorical Gower: Aristotelianism in the *Confessio Amantis*'s Treatment of "Rethorique"', in *John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts*, ed. by Malte Urban (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 155–73.

227 Donavin, 'Rhetorical Gower', pp. 155–73.

the will toward intellection and rational perspective. Genius's rhetoric, comprised of sermon *exempla* meant to show the negative consequences of amatory passions, finally move the lover's will toward more dignified pastimes. Once Amans comes to his senses and abandons his pursuit of love, Genius disappears, leaving 'John Gower' to reclaim his identity. This reclamation begins in Book 7 when Amans shows interest in rhetorical theory and the liberal arts, in other words, when he surfaces from an obsession with his sexual deprivation to consider academic matters. If Amans's curiosity brings the will and intellect together, Genius's meditations on the tenderness of the marriage bond show the priest more in tune with Amans's feelings. Book 7 concludes with explorations of how Aristotelian learning might be applied in the world, and the maintenance of conjugal chastity is one way, Genius asserts, to manifest prudence. As Genius and Amans move toward mutual understanding, the reintegration of 'John' becomes a real possibility in Book 8, which focuses on the sin of incest and thus points to the Baptist's reappearance. Genius begins Book 8 with a hymn-like discourse on God's creation of the first families and marriage law, and he proceeds from this pious beginning to a tale of Apollonius's triumphs against incestuous foes. In *Incest Narratives and the Structure of Gower's Confessio Amantis*, I have shown a progression in Genius's treatment of consanguineous liaisons: from his sympathy for them in the 'Tale of Canace and Machaire' to his fulmination against them in Book 8's 'Tale of Apollonius of Tyre'.<sup>228</sup> By Books 7 and 8 Genius expresses a reverence for chastity incompatible with his role as Venus's priest but consonant with the veneration for virginity avowed by a newly recovered 'John'.

In the 'Tale of Apollonius of Tyre' Venus's priest takes the Baptist's uncompromising position against Herod's alliance with Herodias and applies that perspective to the wickedness of Antiochus, who is condemned and slain for a liaison with his daughter. Amans's frustration in not comprehending how the *exemplum* applies to him propels the lover to seek understanding and finally to the awareness that Cupid has tyrannized wits in the same way that Antiochus dominated his daughter.<sup>229</sup> Amans, seeing himself in Venus's mirror, realizes that he is old, desires wisdom rather than sexual consummation, and re-adopts the name John as Genius exits the scene. This 'nouus Iohannes', however, does not ascend a pulpit once again for preaching and prophecy, but returns home to pray, seeking the pious practice that nourished the two Saints John, whether in the wilderness or

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<sup>228</sup> Donavin, *Incest Narratives*.

<sup>229</sup> On Cupid as a ruler whose authority rests in a philosophy of kingly magnificence, See Elliot R. Kendall, *Lordship and Literature: John Gower and the Politics of the Great Household* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 114–27.



on Patmos, for their larger missions.<sup>230</sup> 'John' is thus reanimated but only for a restricted role. In both the Latin and English verse prayers that follow the conversion and exile of 'John' from Venus's court, the Baptist might surface in entreating God's correction of the estates and the Evangelist might direct the discourse toward contemplation of providence's ends, but 'John' emphasizes that he will request God's guidance in these matters, rather than act as God's herald. Reclaiming the moral vision and adherence to God's law that is central to the Baptist's and Evangelist's messianic rhetoric, 'John' lauds the glories of creation and insists on the responsibility of the king in honourably governing a portion of that creation. A king may escape Antiochus's and Cupid's tyranny only through God's 'grace [which] schal be suffisant'.<sup>231</sup> Thus, 'John', whose name means 'grace', publishes his prayer and takes a quieter role in preparing England for the Apocalypse through his poetry.

## Conclusion

In what he thought to be the time of the Antichrist, Gower developed a biblical ethos involving the prophet of Revelation and the New Testament preacher of penitence. John the Evangelist and John the Baptist, who shared the poet's first name, provided a masculine voice for Gower — sometimes sorrowful, sometimes hortatory, sometimes mystical — in order to grieve over the current state of England, reform sinners, and offer providential visions. Deeply identifying with the meaning of his first name and with those named John in the Holy Family, Gower offered a corporate and sanctified perspective in the *Mirour de l'Omme*, *Vox Clamantis*, *Cronica Tripartita*, and *Confessio Amantis*. In the *Mirour* the Baptist and Evangelist filled the poet's speech and aligned it with Marian values. In the *Vox Clamantis* and the *Visio Anglie* that introduces it, Gower invokes the Evangelist as a muse to aid with the Baptist-like preaching that addresses itself to Richard II and uncovers the corruption underneath the Ricardian society. In the *Vox*, under the Evangelist's direction, the Baptist prepares his hearers for an imminent apocalypse. As patron saints of English kings, the Baptist and Evangelist, incorporated there into the narrator's speech, should have the power to move monarchs to righteous causes. Mingled in verses with Ovidian diction, they should manifest both the intellectual and spiritual authority to reveal God's creation in flux and England's opportunities to achieve peace and Christian harmony. Nevertheless, no matter how

230 In addition to a life of contemplation appropriate for a saint, Ovid's exile from the whirlwind of life is another model, in Bruce Harbert's estimation, for John's retreat. Harbert, 'Lessons from the Great Clerk', p. 96.

231 CA 8, l. 3099.

well the Baptist's preaching ruled by the Evangelist's scriptural expertise can move hearers toward the truth through holy emotions, Gower, as he admits in the *Confessio Amantis*, despairs that England has not heard the Word in his *Vox*. By the time of Henry IV's accession and the composition of the *Cronica Tripertita*, Gower's Johannine ethos is much less robust. Gower looks toward his final representation of 'John' in his tomb in the Baptist's chapel.

## *Virgo bona dicendi perita*

### *The Good Maiden Speaking Well*

A well-known description of the ideal orator, *vir bonus dicendi peritus* (a good man speaking well) was articulated by Cato the Elder in a letter to his son, cited by Seneca the Elder in his *Controversiae*, and popularized by Quintilian in the *Institutio Oratoria*.<sup>1</sup> In the Roman Republic and thereafter, ‘a good man speaking well’ was a virtuous and eloquent participant in government and society, his virtue arising from the study of philosophy and his eloquence proceeding from an intensive education in the *trivium*. Courses in the liberal arts that began with grammar and rhetoric and proceeded to logic, philosophy, and the sciences equipped a young man to deliberate on important issues, make ethical choices, defend his interests well in courts and legislative bodies, and present his thoughts in sweet and persuasive language.<sup>2</sup> In Chapter One we noted Gower’s respect for the *virī boni dicendi periti* Silanus, Cicero, and Cato the Younger, yet Gower knew that their orations could not completely prevent the damage done to Rome by Catiline. Similarly, in the previous chapter we explored Gower’s appropriation of the narrative voices of two Christian *virī boni dicendi periti* — John the Baptist and John the Evangelist — incomparable prophets and preachers who bypass liberal arts training to arrive at a righteous life through grace and achieve expertise in speech through revelation. Like their counterparts in the Roman Republic, however, their warnings, channelled through the narrators of the *Mirour de l’Omme*, *Vox Clamantis*, and *Confessio Amantis* as admonishments for the English public, are ineffective in keeping the realm from harm. This chapter explains how, in the face of failings in masculine oratory, Gower presents a new feminine ideal of the upright and expert rhetorician: the *virgo bona dicendi perita* (the good maiden speaking well).<sup>3</sup> That Gower models this righteous and eloquent

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1 Cato the Elder, Letters, Fragment 14 in *Cato the Elder: Complete Works* (Hastings, E. Sussex: Delphi Classics, 2016), [www.delphiclassics.com](http://www.delphiclassics.com); Seneca the Elder, *Declamations: Controversiae*, Books 1–6, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 1. Pr. 9.; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, XII. 1.1. *Silva Rhetoricae* <<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Primary%20Texts/Quintilian.htm>>.

2 W. Leonard Grant, ‘Cicero on the Moral Character of the Orator’, *The Classical Journal*, 38.8 (1943), 472–78.

3 Misty Schieberle has written about the good counsel of maidens and feminized speakers. See Misty Schieberle, “‘Thing Which a Man Mai Noght Areche’: Women and Counsel in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*”, *Chaucer Review*, 42.1 (2007), 91–109; Misty Schieberle,

maiden on the Virgin Mary is proven through both close readings of his poems and the reception of Shakespeare, whose *Pericles* augments the Marian rhetoric of Gower's 'Apollonius of Tyre'.<sup>4</sup>

As Misty Schieberle points out, Gower's female speakers often accomplish '[t]hing which a man mai noght areche' (a thing which a man may not attain).<sup>5</sup> Concentrating chiefly on secular and courtly contexts for Gower's women orators, however, she would minimize any association between them and the Virgin Mary. Contending that these women are not passive, like Marian intercessors, Schieberle argues that they attain 'serious, intellectual authority' through citations of '*de regimine* counsel, which classifies them as *political* counsellors'.<sup>6</sup> While agreeing with Schieberle that *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* gain credibility in Gower's fictional political scenes, I would argue along with Patrick J. Gallacher, Claire Banchich, and T. Matthew N. McCabe that a theological register also obtains.<sup>7</sup> In McCabe's perceptive reading, Gower's maiden speakers deliver a feminized rhetoric resulting from the Word's taking flesh from the Mother.<sup>8</sup> As I will demonstrate, Gower was encouraged through an array of cultural practices and artistic works to think of the Virgin as an icon of excellence in language skills. 'Indeed,' Banchich claims, 'Mary's prudent eloquence was highly renowned' and familiar to Gower in a variety of forms with which

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*Feminized Counsel and the Literature of Advice, 1380–1500*, Disput 26 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014). Schieberle takes a secular, political approach to the counsel given by Gower's women, whereas this chapter will find the basis of their authority in Marian studies. Also on authority (or not) in Gower's women, see Tara Williams, *Inventing Womanhood: Gender and Language in Later Middle English Writing* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2011). Chapter 2 of Williams's book argues that the CA does not present women in authority because its main interest is moral and ethical advice to men. This chapter will be arguing for the spiritual authority attained by Marian characters in both the CA and MO.

<sup>4</sup> Long ago, Patrick J. Gallacher pointed out Gower's investment in the Virgin Mary and identified an 'Annunciation pattern' in the CA's discourses of 'amorous persuasion'. See Patrick J. Gallacher, *Love, the Word, and Mercury: A Reading of John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), pp. 26–43.

<sup>5</sup> The quotation alludes to Misty Schieberle's title for her article 'Thing Which a Man Mai Noght Areche'. Schieberle's title quotes from the 'Tale of Three Questions', CA 1, ll. 3206–07.

<sup>6</sup> Misty Schieberle, 'Feminized Counsel', p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick J. Gallacher, *Love, the Word, and Mercury*, pp. 26–43; Claire Banchich, 'Holy Fear and Poetics in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Book I', in *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium*, ed. by R. F. Yeager, Studies in Medieval Culture, 46 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), pp. 188–215; T. Matthew N. McCabe, *Gower's Vulgar Tongue: Ovid, Lay Religion, and English Poetry in the Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011), pp. 122–30. While Gallacher and Banchich are more interested in the MO's and CA's Marian references, Gallacher in scenes approximating the Annunciation and Banchich in episodes showing holy fear as exemplified in the Virgin, McCabe emphasizes the Incarnation and kenosis.

<sup>8</sup> McCabe, *Gower's Vulgar Tongue*, p. 130.

he endowed female characters who bear the Virgin's attributes.<sup>9</sup> Several of the *artes poetriae* from which Gower might have learned intermediate grammar and rhetoric, including one by a master he favoured, John of Garland, explicitly teach that both the Word and goodly words proceed from the Virgin. This chapter will examine the Marian rhetoric of characters who provide feminine counterparts to other strongly articulate religious figures such as John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. The Marian model of persuasive womanhood is neither passive nor unserious, as Schieberle implies, but actively speaks the truth in an effort to countermand sin and conciliate between sinning parties, whether infractions exist in the state, church, people, or individual.

Even before Schieberle's analysis of feminine counsel in Gower, scholars interrogated the medieval poet's gendered classifications of speech. In 'Gower's Rethorique', we discovered by way of Diane Watt's analysis that Gower reveals the shortcomings of classical *virī boni dicendi periti* in explicitly gendered terms.<sup>10</sup> While the hyper-masculine, straightforward speeches of Silanus, Cicero, and Cato recommend the execution of Catiline and his allies, Caesar's 'wordes[...] [c]oloureth in an other weie' as they caution against capital punishment for Roman citizens in feminized language.<sup>11</sup> Watt sees in this discursive struggle the pitting of a forthright masculine oratory against a cheaply ornamented ('coloured') feminized defence, neither contributing to the resolution of civil strife. Engaging in frank preaching and prophecy that might be compared to Silanus, Cicero, and Cato's political accusations and forebodings, John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, as we discovered in Chapter Two, offer biblical *virī boni dicendi periti* who share the poet's first name. The language with which God endows them exposes secular corruption and advances divine purposes, yet when their voices merge with the narrators of Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*, *Vox Clamantis*, and *Confessio Amantis*, they do not have the power to effect change — in the case of the *Mirour* to release the English estates from the Devil's power and in the case of the *Vox* and *Confessio* to set a fractious Ricardian England in balance and move readers toward a *pax Christi*. Although Gower invokes the Baptist and the Evangelist one last time in the Prologue to the *Confessio Amantis*, by the end of this introduction, Gower abandons these *personae* and expresses the wish for another poet like Arion the harper of Ovid's *Fasti* to bring everyone and

9 The quotation is from Claire Banchich, 'Holy Fear and Poetics', p. 195. Kathryn J. Lewis points out that the popularity of Katherine of Alexandria's cult also contributed to veneration for highly educated and supremely eloquent holy women. See Kathryn J. Lewis, 'Women and Power', in *Historians on John Gower*, ed. by Stephen H. Rigby with Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2019), p. 328.

10 Diane Watt, *Amoral Gower*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 49.

11 CA 7, 1594, ll. 1624–25.

everything into 'good accord'.<sup>12</sup> If the preaching and visionary rhetoric of the Saints John fall short of inspiring accord such as Arion inspires, if the masculine straight talk of Silanus, Cicero, and Cato fail to turn the Roman senate toward the best policies, and if the feminized appeals of Caesar only enable the wrong outcome and vanish into the air like cheap perfume, what is needed, Gower concludes, is a purified and pleasing feminine peace-making rhetoric modelled after that of the Virgin Mary, best of women.

The Latin phrase providing this chapter's title, *virgo bona dicendi perita*, refers to Gower's honourable and conciliating female orators and points to both Gower's theories concerning chaste speech and his practice of placing it in the mouths of Marian characters. His theories are expressed in the *Mirour de l'Omme* through personifications of the vices and virtues, allegorical characters who typify the vices and virtues of speech. Adherence to a virtuous Marian model of speech renders the *Mirour de l'Omme*, according to William Calin, 'so passionate, satirical, vehement, and sublime in its rhetoric, so grandiose in its scope'.<sup>13</sup> The pure language which Gower associates with the Virgin supports the *Mirour's* multiple devotional purposes: to contrast sin with holiness, warn of sin's encroachment into the world, offer penitential rubrics for personal and public practice, and praise the Mother of God.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the many Marian exemplars of holy speech in the *Mirour*, Gower's Marian rhetorical practice is illustrated by sapient and virginal young women in the *Confessio Amantis* who, at the same age in which Mary was believed to experience the Annunciation, express themselves in wise and healing language. These young women are Peronelle, whose sagacious solutions to King Alfonso's riddles counteract the sin of pride in Book 1, and Thaise, whose dignified self-defences promote chastity and harmony in Book 8. After Gower abandons the *personae* of the Saints John in the Prologue to the *Confessio Amantis*, he bookends this long narrative poem with the wondrous accomplishments of two Marian rhetoricians, one untying the issues of the first book and the other effecting a climactic reunion in the last. In the *Mirour de l'Omme* and the *Confessio Amantis*, Marian characters who are expert in morally efficacious and community-building rhetoric, whether they be allegorical personifications in the former's grand psychomachia or imitable maidens in the latter's tales of marriage, lust, and pride, fulfil Gower's ideals for oratory, as set out in the chapter on 'Gower's Rethorique'. The *Mirour de l'Omme's* personifications of rhetorical virtues and the *Confessio's* Peronelle

<sup>12</sup> CA, Henrican Pro., l. 1065.

<sup>13</sup> William Calin, 'John Gower's Continuity in the Tradition of French Fin' Amor', *Mediaevalia*, 16 (1993 [for 1990]), 91.

<sup>14</sup> On the devotional purposes of the *Mirour*, see Thomas Bestul, 'Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*', *Mediaevalia*, 16 (1993 [for 1990]), 307–28.

and Thaise, all of them associated with the Virgin Mary, deploy emotions to move the will toward truth, acknowledge the power of the Word, and speak in a feminized version of the plain style.

## Medieval Marian Rhetoric

This chapter's concept of the *virgo bona dicendi perita* is rooted in both contemporary theories of medieval discourse and medieval arts touting the Virgin as the most eloquent of women. Among contemporary theorists, the work of Robin Hass Birky is critical for defining the kind of speech belonging to the *virgo bona dicendi perita*. Before she died in a car accident — tragically and too young — Birky wrote persuasively about a classification of medieval discourse called 'Marian Rhetoric', a simple, abbreviated style in which any rhetorical flourishes were thought to enable a presentation of the whole truth.<sup>15</sup> Although Marian writings and examples of the *virgo bona dicendi perita* permeate medieval culture, Birky derives her concept of Marian rhetoric specifically from John of Garland's *Parisiana Poetria*.<sup>16</sup> John of Garland, in turn, builds his theory upon the theology of the Word, traditions of the sapient Virgin, and the legacy of Martianus Capella's *Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, which incited commentaries and art forms connecting Mary to the liberal arts.<sup>17</sup>

John of Garland, who taught at the universities of Paris and Toulouse, was a prolific scholar, authoring textbooks on grammar and music, as well as epic and lyric poetry in praise of the Virgin Mary.<sup>18</sup> Garland's *Parisiana Poetria*, a composition handbook for poetry and prose, was not as popular as the best-selling *ars poetriae*, Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*, but the *Parisiana Poetria* was nevertheless studied in England by noteworthy scholars such as Roger Bacon in one of the manuscripts transported from France by Garland's students.<sup>19</sup> As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, Gower was certainly privy to another of Garland's Marian handbooks, the *Epithalamium Beate Virginis Marie*, a pedagogical poem based on *The*

15 Robin Hass Birky, "The Word Was Made Flesh": Gendered Bodies and Anti-Bodies in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Arts of Poetry', in *Medieval Rhetoric: A Casebook*, ed. by Scott Troyan (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 182–86.

16 John of Garland, *Parisiana Poetria*, ed. and trans. by Traugott Lawler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

17 William Harris Stahl, ed. and trans., *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts*, 2 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

18 For a description of Garland's career and works, see A. G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066–1422* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 163–76.

19 *Parisiana Poetria* manuscripts of English provenance include Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Ll. 1.14, 55<sup>r</sup>–69<sup>r</sup> and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lat. Misc. d. 66, 1<sup>r</sup>–40<sup>r</sup>.

*Marriage of Philology and Mercury* that teaches the liberal arts by singing the praises of the Virgin's marriage to Christ.<sup>20</sup> Although the *Parisiana Poetria* does not focus as sharply as the *Epithalamium* on the Virgin, Garland's *ars poetriae* claims Mary's chaste body as the template for well-structured literature and deploys examples of Marian verse in its instruction on rhythmic poetry. 'Mary plays the cognitive and linguistic muse to John', Birky explains, because the Virgin's body conveys the truth in a divine form.<sup>21</sup> The wheel of Marian verse that occurs in some manuscripts of the *Parisiana Poetria* along with Garland's teachings on rhyme provides an effective visual for the handbook's intersections between the virginal body and the matter of a poem (Figure 2).<sup>22</sup> Inside the wheel, rhyming verses such as 'creata est beata' (the creature was blessed) and 'sacrata est ornata' (the sanctified woman was adorned) underscore the Virgin Mary's blessings by God's speech act at the Annunciation and her sanctification through the Christ child, her 'ornament', a divine figure of speech melded to her virgin text.<sup>23</sup>

If in Marian rhetoric the Virgin is embellished by her holy pregnancy, the Word is conversely adorned by the Virgin. According to Birky, Marian rhetoric depends upon the belief in the Word made flesh, the resulting emphasis on the text as a body, and a concept of a bare text that may or may not be adorned in a variety of ways. While the divine, masculine body of Christ is not fully present in human speech, Birky points out, the twelfth- and thirteenth-century *artes poetriae* attempt to teach composition strategies that might remediate language's fallen nature.<sup>24</sup> Geoffrey of Vinsauf, for instance, equates figures of thought with Christ's human garment, his salvific expression in the world.<sup>25</sup> To salvage human language, the garment must be pure; it must be the Virgin. Just as the Word took human form from Mary, the rhetorical ornaments clothing the text must cleanly conform to its good message. John of Garland uses metaphors of both painting and clothing to describe the imposition of rhetorical figures on the body of the moral text. He declares that 'the truth is plain, open, and naked'

20 John of Garland, *Epithalamium Beate Virginis Marie*, ed. and trans. by Antonio Saiani (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1995). While Garland's *Epithalamium Beate Virginis Marie* is an as-yet unacknowledged source for the MO, Bestul has helpfully fleshed out the list of devotional sources. See Bestul, 'Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*', pp. 307–28. Macaulay reports potential French sources and analogues for the MO, as well as quotations from authorities. See G. C. Macaulay, introduction to *The Complete Works of John Gower: The French Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), xii–xv, xlvii–xlviii, liii–lxv.

21 Birky, 'The Word Was Made Flesh', p. 183.

22 Garland, 'Parisiana Poetria', fig. 5, p. 392.

23 Georgiana Donavin, *Scribit Mater: Mary and the Language Arts in the Literature of Medieval England* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), pp. 107–10.

24 Birky, 'The Word Was Made Flesh', p. 168.

25 Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *PN* in Faral, pp. 232–33.



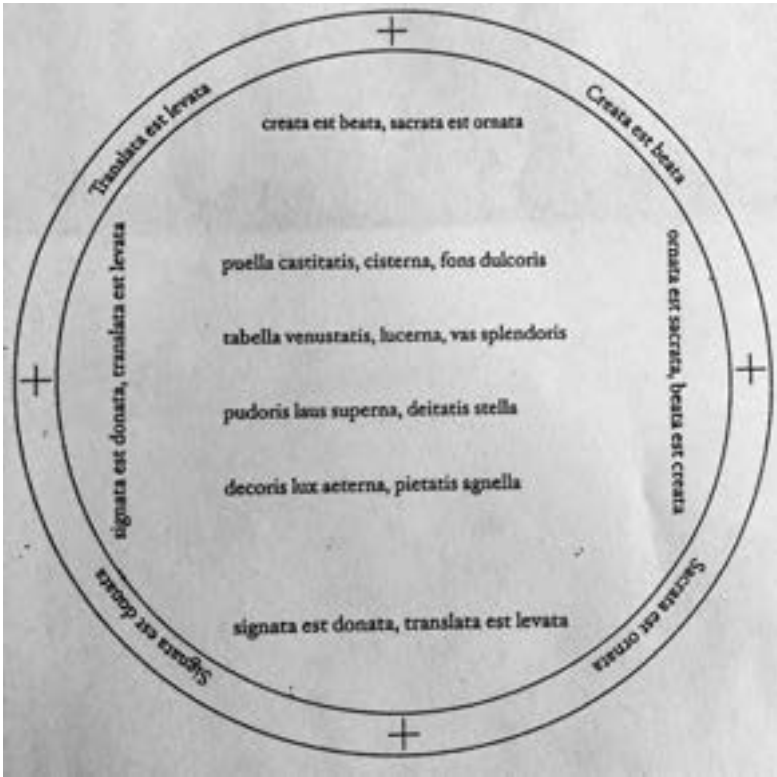


Figure 2. Wheel of Marian Verse, John of Garland, *Parisiana Poetria*, edited and translated by Traugott Lawler, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library Volume 65, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Copyright ©1974, 2020 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

and that compositions may often be divided between naked and painted texts, ‘naked’ connoting masculine forthrightness that Christ presented to the world and ‘painted’ the feminine deception exemplified by Eve.<sup>26</sup> For Garland, the Virgin Mary ameliorates the degradations of feminized, painted rhetoric and shapes the Word for human understanding. Marian rhetoric, like the Virgin intercessor, exists between the poles of naked and painted rhetoric; Marian rhetoric overcomes the fraudulent effects of an ornate style such as Julius Caesar’s in the Catilinarian debates while at the same time deploying figures of speech to flesh out — incarnate rather than

<sup>26</sup> Birky, ‘The Word Was Made Flesh’, p. 172; For a statement on how a naked style promotes truth, see the a sample student letter in Garland, *Parisiana Poetria*, 5.11.

obfuscate — the truth. Mary brings colour and a modest dress to the Word, as Garland demonstrates in the highly embellished model of composition composed for his students, 'A Rhymed Poem on the Blessed Virgin'.<sup>27</sup> Marian *rhetorica* is *plena* rather than plain in the sense of Gower's Ciceronian model that we investigated in Chapter One. Marian rhetoric is full of divine meaning and revelatory rhetorical devices. It is not the naked masculine speech of Cato, Cicero, and Silanus, but the modest feminine vestment of the Word. We saw in Chapter One that *repetitio* is the special ornament of an otherwise masculine plain style, and Marian rhetoric dons *repetitiones* as well as other elocutionary threads. In Luke, the Virgin takes a vow of holy *repetitio* when she replies to the angel Gabriel 'let it be to me according to your word'; Mary's life itself manifests and reiterates the Word.<sup>28</sup> In the *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* from the *Confessio Amantis* who will appear later in this chapter, we will especially note assonance and consonance that knits their speeches into a continuous text, just as Mary endowed Christ with a seamless, 'plaine' human flesh.<sup>29</sup>

The concept of a Marian *rhetorica* that is *plena* with heavenly figures of speech reminds us of how often Gower uses the word 'plein/e' to describe moral and trustworthy elocution. We saw in Chapter One that, according to the *Confessio Amantis*'s lecture on 'Rethorique', plain speech can refer to the straightforward masculine speaking style of 'Cithero', but to understand the connection between plain speech and Marian rhetoric, we must press into etymological territory. Perhaps influenced by Old French, Gower uses one form in both Middle English and French ('plein/e') to denote both 'plain/e' (simple, unornamented) and 'plein/e' (full, whole, abundant, related to Latin 'plenus').<sup>30</sup> In Old French and then in Francophones such as Gower, it is often difficult to distinguish the two homonyms in literary quotations.<sup>31</sup> The habitual collapse of the two morphemes into a single usage has a particular bearing on Marian rhetoric, allowing for the modest verbal clothing that is supplied by the Virgin to be considered 'plain', or elegantly simple, because it results from the fullness of pregnancy with Christ, the Truth. Indeed, in Middle English, a 'plein/e' confession is a full acknowledgement of faith that might be delivered in language like the 'plain/e' cloth in which Mary wrapped her

27 Garland, *Parisiana Poetria*, 7.34.

28 Luke 1. 38.

29 MED plain (e. adj.), 1b. (b): 'of the body or a part of the body: smooth, unwrinkled'.

30 According to the MED, the adjective 'pleine' indicates fullness or wholeness and derives from the Latin 'plenus', while 'plaine' describes something that is unadorned or simple, including types of cloth and music. Gower uses the first spelling to indicate both words and, as I argue here, to connect them in a theory about Marian rhetoric. See especially MED plain (e. adj.), 3, 4a and 4b and MED plein(e. adj.), 3.

31 According to the MED, 'OF **plein, plain, plene** & L **plēnus; plein(e** adj. is sometimes difficult to distinguish from **plain(e** adj.) [...]'.

divine son.<sup>32</sup> In addition to rhetorical figures illuminating a plain and holy Truth, Marian rhetoric is controlled and concise. According to Birky, late medieval teachings associate truth, brevity, and modest grace with the Virgin, whose maternal body remained a *hortus conclusus* just as the orator's mouth should be closed to falsehood, garrulousness, and overwrought language.

Promulgating these teachings, John of Garland finds Marian rhetoric to be the postlapsarian mind's key to capturing reasonable thought. Between encomia to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the *Parisiana Poetria*, Garland lectures on the redemptive force of logic;<sup>33</sup> in Birky's summation: 'It is through Mary and her role in the Incarnation that human perception can be restored'.<sup>34</sup> Marian rhetoric *conceives* and spreads the Truth while representatives of Venus cloud the intellect with lust.<sup>35</sup> In her study of Mary's physical and mental conception of the Christ child Laura Saetveit Miles demonstrates how often medieval authors manipulated both meanings of *concupere*.<sup>36</sup> Garland was perhaps the most famous among the thirteenth-century English masters of the *trivium* in composing a handbook advancing a Marian rhetoric emphasizing connections between the Mother's conception and human intellection and expression, but he was not alone. Gervais of Melkley and Walter of Wimborne, both teachers of beginning Latin, used poetic praises of the Virgin to demonstrate basic linguistic constructions and rhetorical style. Gervais characterizes a Virgin who gives birth to beautiful expressions, and Walter declares her the embodiment of all Latin declensions (except the nominative, which belongs to God).<sup>37</sup> All three masters insisted that the Virgin, Mother of the Word, is the source of all true, pleasing, and efficacious words.

The *artes poetriae* from which Birky constructs various categories of medieval discourses, including Marian rhetoric, participate in Catholic theological traditions identifying Christ as *logos* and Mary as the wise container for the Word. According to apocryphal gospels, spiritual biographies, and mystery plays — for instance, the *Protoevangelium of James*, the Marian narratives in the *Legenda aurea*, and the N-Town *Mary Play* —

32 MED, *plein* (e. adj.) 3; *plain* (e. adj.) 1b.

33 Garland, *Parisiana Poetria*, 7.23–30. The verse praising logic occurs at 7.27.

34 Birky, 'The Word Was Made Flesh', p. 184.

35 Garland, *Parisiana Poetria*; Birky, 'The Word Was Made Flesh', p. 185.

36 Laura Saetveit Miles, *The Virgin Mary's Book at the Annunciation* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2020).

Chapter 1 of Miles's book lays out beliefs concerning Mary's 'conception', and the ensuing chapters demonstrate how various medieval authors dramatize or imitate this conception.

37 Hans-Jürgen Gräbener, *Gervais von Melkley: Ars Poetica* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1965), for instance, 162.14, 230.7. Walter of Wimborne, 'Ave Virgo Mater Christi', in *The Poems of Walter of Wimborne*, ed. by A. G. Rigg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p. 159, stanza 61. See Georgiana Donavin, 'The Virgin Mary as Lady Grammar in the Medieval West', *Traditio*, 74 (2019), 279–305.

Mary's life story, one of perfect speech acts, reflects her status as Mother of the Word.<sup>38</sup> In these narrative and dramatic representations, she demonstrates from her childhood that she possesses special gifts in reading the scripture, memorizing the Psalms, and speaking modestly and righteously. By interpreting scripture as a prologue to Christ's birth, remembering discourses for later citation and performance, and adopting an appropriate style, Mary shows expertise in the rhetorical office of arrangement, memory, and elocution. In various medieval media depicting the Annunciation, her perfect answer to the angel Gabriel reveals her acumen, understanding of messianic prophecy, and holy brevity: 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word' accepts the holy paradox of the Virgin Birth, vows obedience, and agrees to incorporate the celestial Word, all in a humble and concise expression.<sup>39</sup> Visiting her cousin Elizabeth, she offers amplification, too, when in the *Magnificat*, she bursts forth in a new psalm. While pregnant with the Christ child, she holds within her all aspects of creation, including the arts that sought to describe and explain that creation, and in Bethlehem she gives birth to the Word, the God whose verbal commands created the universe. Medieval teachings on the liberal arts sought to harness the divine creative principle inherent in human language and to honour the Virgin as their human source. Because the Virgin acquired great wisdom through her bodily and spiritual intimacy with Christ, who is both Word and celestial Wisdom, she was believed to comprehend all knowledge and display special accomplishments in the speech arts.<sup>40</sup> It would be through prayer, *lectio divina*, and bearing witness that she would fulfil her providential mission. In the thirteenth century the Dominicans recognized the verbal power of this witness by making the Virgin the Patroness of Preachers. Gower proves his awareness of apocryphal, biographical, and poetical representations of Mary's well-spoken life when, for the final section of the *Mirour de l'Omme*,

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38 The *Protoevangelium of James*, *Evangelium nativitatis Mariae*, and the many versions of Mary's life, such as that in the *Legenda aurea* that are based upon the apocryphal gospels, present Mary as a studious girl, whose special gifts are revealed during early studies in the temple. See M. R. James, ed. and trans, *The Apocryphal New Testament: Being the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles and Apocalypses* (1924; repr. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953); Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. by Th. Graesse, 3rd edn (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller Verlag, 1969). In addition to the apocryphal gospels and saints' lives, mystery plays such as the N-Town *Mary Play* concentrate on the Virgin's youth and precocity. See Peter Meredith, ed., *The Mary Play from the N. Town Manuscript* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997). For an in-depth analysis of these texts and others like them, see Donavin, *Scribit Mater* and Miles, *The Virgin Mary's Book*.

39 Luke 1. 38. On Mary's reading at the Annunciation, see Laura Saetveit Miles, 'The Origins and Development of the Virgin Mary's Book at the Annunciation', *Speculum*, 89.3 (2014), 632–69.

40 Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 190–91.

he composes a 'Life of the Virgin,' a text that we will be addressing in Chapter Six.<sup>41</sup>

This characterization of Mary as a *virgo bona dicendi perita* derives not only from a theology of the Word, but also from comparisons between the Virgin and various female figures in one of the most popular early textbooks for teaching the liberal arts: Martianus Capella's *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*. The *artes poetriae* of John of Garland, Gervais of Melkley, and Walter of Wimborne inherit and supersede teachings from Capella that became associated with the Virgin. George L. Hamilton observed over a hundred years ago that Gower expresses his awareness of the *Marriage* in Book 7 of the *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>42</sup> In Capella's allegory, the nuptials of Mercury, god of rhetoric, and Philology, learned bride, are celebrated by personifications of the seven liberal arts, dotal maidens who provide lectures on their subject matter. Lady Grammar holds forth on Latin syntax and literary interpretation, Lady Rhetoric commands approaches to composition and speech, and Lady Logic conquers all with her strategies for debate before the maidens representing the *quadrivium* present themselves to the newlyweds. The teachings of all Martianus's dotal maidens preserve pre-Christian approaches to academic study, but in *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*'s Carolingian heyday and beyond, medieval scholars fleshed out Catholic contexts for Capella's textbook. A Marian scholar in this vein, Philip of Harvengt, links the *Marriage* to the Song of Songs and the character of Philology, Mercury's wife, to the Virgin, Bride of Christ.<sup>43</sup> Compared not only to Philology, but also to the ladies of the *trivium* in medieval art, scholarship, and exegesis since the twelfth century, the Virgin reigns over language instruction not only as Mother of the Word, but also as Our Lady, whose enunciation and persuasiveness rival Lady Grammar's, Lady Rhetoric's, and Lady Logic's. From the Virgin's position amidst sculptures of the liberal arts on the west façade of Chartres Cathedral to her possession of Lady Grammar's implements (book and birch rod) in medieval manuscript images to her portrayal in literature as a militant Lady Rhetoric delivering a battle speech against the personified vices to her depiction as a lawyer who, like Lady Logic, defeats the devil's perverted thinking, the Virgin commands all *trivium* teachings. Indeed, as bearer of the Word, she is the foundation of all *trivium* teachings.<sup>44</sup>

41 In *Scribit Mater*, pp. 27–74, I provide a full treatment of the lives of the Virgin composed in England and Gower's place in that tradition.

42 George L. Hamilton, 'Some Sources of the Seventh Book of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', *Modern Philology*, 9.3 (1912), 323–46.

43 Philip of Harvengt, *Commentaria in Cantica Canticorum*, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae*, 221 vols (Paris: Garnier, 1844–64), 203, cols 471–72.

44 On the west façade of The Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres, the Royal Portal contains a sculpture of the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child on her lap (the Seat of Wisdom) surrounded by smaller sculptures of the liberal arts as described by Martianus Capella.

As I demonstrate in *Scribit Mater: Mary and the Language Arts in the Literature of Medieval England*, the Virgin's position above the door to the famous Our Lady of Chartres Cathedral school is paradigmatic for her position in the language arts.<sup>45</sup> There, as the Seat of Wisdom with the Christ child on her lap and sculptures of the liberal arts all around her, she is creation's master synecdoche, containing divine understanding as well as the arts that enable understanding. She bears the Word and supports instruction in words. She is the object of devotion in the books of hours from which many received their first literacy training, and her imitable speech is heard across a gamut of literatures in late medieval England.<sup>46</sup> She recites prophecy and divine ordinances in the mystery plays, articulates the full range of her joys and sorrows in Middle English lyrics, and offers consolation to female mystics. While Gower would not have been familiar with every witness to Marian rhetoric, he could not have escaped notice of the Queen of the Liberal Arts and Our Lady of Literature. Like Chaucer, who depicted the Mother as an advocate in *An ABC* and as a muse for song and translation in the Prioress's and Second Nun's tales, Gower both accepted Mary's supremacy in the language arts and endeavoured to represent her many rhetorical roles.<sup>47</sup> For Gower and his contemporaries Mary's image was interlocked with those of the liberal arts and inspirational for poets and devotees who wished to compose in language as perfect as the Mother herself.

The Marian *artes poetriae*, especially handbooks by John of Garland through which Gower most likely learned the 'Mother tongue', teach a simple and lovely eloquence that captures reasonable thought and avoids the faults of Gower's strident male voices, whether they be in the Roman senate, by the Jordan, or in Patmos. In addition, Marian rhetoric offers more substance and integrity than Caesar's feminized embellishments that develop a counterintuitive case. Birky's definition of 'Marian Rhetoric' conforms closely to Gower's philosophy of a rational, accurate, and simply stated rhetoric as expressed in the *Confessio Amantis's* lecture on the

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For a wide range of associations between the Virgin Mary and Capella's Lady Grammar, see Donavin, 'The Virgin Mary as Lady Grammar'. For a literary portrayal of a militant Virgin combatting the vices with Christian rhetoric, see Donavin, *Scribit Mater*, pp. 75–114. Regarding the Virgin's associations with logic, many scholars have noted her various depictions as a lawyer at Christ's court of judgement. For one of the best analyses of Mary's ability to deal with legal charters and solicit Christ's mercy, see Adrienne Williams Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England: Law and Jewishness in Marian Legends* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010).

45 Donavin, *Scribit Mater*. Also, see Donavin 'The Virgin Mary as Lady Grammar'.

46 On literacy training in the books of hours, see especially Virginia Reinburg, *French Books of Hours: Making an Archive of Prayer, c. 1300–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 84.

47 For Chaucer's *An ABC*, as well as the Prioress's and Second Nun's tales, see Larry D. Benson, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

discipline in Book 7, a lecture analysed in Chapter One. However, inquiring there into oratorical opportunities for men, Gower stops short in the 'Rethorique' lecture of associating rhetorical ideals with the Virgin. Because we have seen in Chapter Two how Gower exposes the inadequacies of masculine rhetorical practices from both the classical and Christian worlds, we turn now to the *Mirour de l'Omme* and to female characters in the *Confessio Amantis* for those harmonious and efficacious speakers who, as it happens, embody a divine feminization of Gower's rhetoric. The utterances of these maiden exemplars are best understood according to Birky's concept of Marian rhetoric and in the context of medieval associations between the Virgin and language instruction. A Marian rhetoric as defined by Birky allows us to see how feminine chastity is an element necessary to persuasion in Gower, because the virginal speaker best invokes the power of the Word and offers the simply spoken wisdom whose verbal adornments flesh out the truth.

### Engendering Marian Rhetoric in the *Mirour de l'Omme*

Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme* offers Marian rhetoric against immoral speech which masculine councils are unable to dispel.<sup>48</sup> As Sandy Bardsley observes, in medieval discourses abbreviated and morally infused language is often associated with the Virgin and moral female characters while garrulous, uncontrolled expression is often associated with a promiscuous female body.<sup>49</sup> In the *Mirour's* presentation of Marian rhetoric, however, Gower does not pit chaste women against loose. Humble, honest, and measured habits of Marian speech contrast not so much with garrulity proceeding from a wanton female, but with arrogant, deceitful, and careless talk spouted by sexually perverse personifications of sin. These variously gendered personifications are the Devil's progeny: his child Sin upon whom he conceived Death, the seven daughters (Seven Deadly Sins) spawned by Sin and Death, and the hermaphroditic offspring of the Seven Deadly Sins and the World. For Gower, sin and sinful speech proceed from a diversity of bodies that await the Virgin's healing touch and verbal correction. The multi-gendered personifications of sin oppose

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48 Although most of my references will be to Macaulay's edition of the MO and most of my translations will be my own, occasionally I could not improve upon the accuracy and expression of Wilson's translation of the *Mirour*. Footnotes will show where I have relied on Wilson. See John Gower, *Mirour de l'Omme* (*The Mirror of Mankind*), trans. by William Burton Wilson (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1992).

49 Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 51.

Mary's virginity and virgin rhetoric in the *Mirour* through aberrant sexual behaviours propagating immorality, and thus, incest reproduces prideful, fraudulent, and imprudent children whose conversation is a sign of deep malevolence. In the *Mirour* Gower looks to the *virgines bonae dicendi peritae*, allegorical figures representing Marian values, to provide morally grounded rhetorical counterparts to the Devil's ill-spoken posterity. Righteous expressions about divine truth and loving humanity emerge from the *Mirour's* allegorical representations of chastity and from the Virgin herself, while misleading communications issue from heterogeneous bodies and sexual practices — words, corporeal forms, and habits all awaiting the Virgin's spiritual transformation.<sup>50</sup>

In the *Mirour de l'Omme* incestuous acts of the Devil's clan engender all evil, including malicious rhetoric that issues from hermaphroditic bodies, while the figurative incest of Mary with God transforms all evil to good, including the Marian purification of dishonourable language.<sup>51</sup> As the poem opens, the Devil, taking on female form, bears and nurses his daughter Sin, upon whom he later in male form begets Death, a son whose name 'La Mort' suggests feminine characteristics. Although, as Mark Turner has noticed, when kinship metaphors govern Western narratives, death is almost always represented as masculine, in the *Mirour* Gower suggests the female, regenerating aspect of Death.<sup>52</sup> Diane Watt, in her illuminating analysis of gender fluidity in the *Mirour*, remarks that this aspect is 'shocking', as La Mort is 'wrapped in a worldly mantle and lurking in a closet [before exposing] himself (or herself [...])' to human Flesh.<sup>53</sup> Like his son Death, the Devil, who is the parent and thus the source of all corruption and misery, manifests himself as both male and female, with

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50 Following Gower's description of the MO in a Latin colophon and taking into account the poem's focus on the virtues and vices, Thomas H. Bestul believes that Gower intended the MO as a devotional work for private meditation. See Bestul, 'Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*', p. 307. Fisher had declared the MO 'a private devotional document' but believed that Gower added more public aspects to the poem. See John H. Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 104. Penitential sources, well-known to both Chaucer and Gower, such as Raymund of Pennaforte's *Summa de poenitentia* and Gulielmus Peraldus's *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus*, would have been available to Gower at the library of the Augustinian Priory of St Mary Overie, where Gower resided during the time of the MO's composition (ca. 1376–78). See Fisher, *John Gower*, pp. 59–60, 93–95. Bestul's point is that while the MO certainly contains penitential material, Gower's main purpose in rehearsing it is to lead to the Marian meditations at the end of the text.

51 In *Incest Narratives and the Structure of Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Victoria, B.C.: ELS, 1993), I discuss the interplay in the CA between actual incestuous relationships and references to spiritual, Marian desire for God.

52 Mark Turner, *Death is the Mother of Beauty: Mind, Metaphor, and Criticism* (Christchurch: Cybereditions, 2000), p. 58.

53 Watt, *Amoral Gower*, p. 27.



the procreative capacity to reproduce the agents of his own malevolence. By parenting Sin, the Devil succeeds in verbally eliciting Eve's pride; by begetting Death upon his own daughter, the Devil creates a torment for the children of Eve. The Devil then supports Sin's liaison with Death because both offspring 'trop lui furent ressemblant' (were very much like him).<sup>54</sup> Thus, overinflated with self-regard, the Devil incestuously desires more like himself through the fiendish copulation of his children. That union yields seven daughters, the Seven Deadly Sins. That this hellish mode of reproduction leads to wicked speech is demonstrated in the parliament the Devil holds with Sin, her daughters, and the World in order to corrupt humankind, a forum which the Devil opens with 'parole fiere [...] al dieu offense' (haughty speech [...] offensive to God).<sup>55</sup> As the Devil multiplies in pursuit of his immoral mission, Gower focuses on incest rather than on female promiscuity as the source of wicked rhetoric because of the recursive, self-destructive nature of this taboo sex act. This focus is appropriate for a Baptist-like narrator, modelled on the Forerunner who once inveighed against Herod's consanguineous liaison, now preaching against the malevolence spread by incestuous rhetoric. As Gower would imply later in the 'Tale of Apollonius of Tyre', incest consumes its perpetrators, and at the same time that it has the capability to produce offspring, it destroys household relationships. In 'Apollonius of Tyre', Gower describes, for instance, how the incestuous father Antiochus 'devoureth / His oghne fleissh'.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, by feasting on oneself and one's own offspring, incest destroys as much as it yields and is therefore a figure for all sin, which Gower claims elsewhere in the *Mirour* is 'nient' (nothing).<sup>57</sup>

Gower apparently invents the motif of the incestuous generation of Sin and Death, familiar to readers of *Paradise Lost*, in which Sin is also born of and impregnated by Satan and eventually desired by Death.<sup>58</sup> The relationship between Sin and Death may be suggested by James 1. 15 — 'Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death' — but it took two literary geniuses to

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<sup>54</sup> MO, l. 231.

<sup>55</sup> MO, ll. 351–52. The entire parliament takes place in MO, ll. 277–528. Matthew Giancarlo relates the Devil's parliament to English parliaments contemporary with Gower. See Matthew Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 90–128.

<sup>56</sup> CA 8, ll. 309–10.

<sup>57</sup> On sin as nothing in the *Mirour*, see Robert R. Edwards, *Invention and Authorship in Medieval England* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2017), p. 68.

<sup>58</sup> On Gower's originality, see Macaulay, introduction to *The Complete Works of John Gower: The French Works*, liii. In John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Gordon Teskey, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2020), 2, 747–814, Sin recounts her birth from Satan's head and their incestuous affair. The passage in which Satan flies to hell's gates and encounters his progeny provides the whole story and description of his children. Book 2, ll. 628–89.

expand this maxim into an extended set of personifications. No definitive study has established Milton's knowledge of the *Mirour*, but given his voracious reading habits, facility with French, and similarly conceived narrative, it would be uncanny if he had not.<sup>59</sup> In both the *Mirour de l'Homme* and *Paradise Lost* the Devil is expelled from heaven because of pride, plots revenge against Adam and Eve, catalyses the Incarnation, autonomously gives birth to his daughter Sin, and sponsors the incestuous copulation of evil. Most persuasively, *Paradise Lost's* shift in style for the 'Sin and Death episode', switching temporarily to an allegory like that of the *Mirour*, seems to call attention to the source. However, Milton does not appropriate Gower's poem without adaptations. The seventeenth-century author puritanically edits out Father Devil's gendered shape-shifting and retains a masculine Satan who keeps all the rhetorical power for himself, rather than intersexually bearing children who might aid in Eve's seduction. In Milton Sin springs Athena-like from Lucifer's swollen head as a manifestation of disobedience, rather than as a co-conspirator in the verbal temptation of humankind. Whereas Gower is influenced by allegorical treatises on the liberal arts that associate speech acts with copulation, such as Bernardus Silvestris's *Cosmographia* and Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus*, Milton has the devil's children beget baying hell hounds, rather than corrupt speakers who can corrupt humanity. For Milton, evil rhetoric is not produced through 'intercourse', but instead by the fantastically wrongheaded individual who would ignore God. Milton aggrandizes the wicked orations of a singular Satan, while his source text insists that sin — infractions of speech and other behaviours — is relational. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan easily forgets his daughter Sin, and Death rapes his mother, but the *Mirour de l'Homme* portrays continuous interactions between the Devil and his children and consensual relations between Sin and Death, who produce a large family over time, including personifications of depraved speech.

In the *Mirour* the Devil requires the progeny of Sin and Death — the Seven Deadly Sins — to aid him in what he 'mai noght areche', the urging of humanity-at-large against God, since the corruption of Adam and Eve that followed Sin's birth failed to yield a bevy of followers. With Gower's Devil, a single figure designated by a masculine pronoun may not

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59 John S. P. Tatlock first called attention to the similarity between Milton's and Gower's narratives, but because the MO exists in only one manuscript that was not identified until 1899, thought it was unlikely that Milton had read Gower. See John S. P. Tatlock, 'Milton's Sin and Death', *Modern Language Notes*, 21.8 (1906), 240. Fisher declares that Milton's use of Gower as a source is an open question. See Fisher, *John Gower*, p. 164. Fisher traces the history of the one extant manuscript of the MO (now Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Additional 3035) and suggests that around 1745 it was held in a manor house near Gloucester. See Fisher, *John Gower*, p. 92. We cannot know for certain whether Milton might have encountered this manuscript or another lost witness to the *Mirour* in London or Cambridge.

solely attain great things through his own rhetoric but needs the counsel and oratory of a host of feminine aids. After Sin and Death reproduce the Seven Deadly Sins, the human Soul reasons with the Flesh, and Fear makes humanity recoil from the Devil's blandishments, though Eve had submitted to them.<sup>60</sup> As we proceed in an analysis of the *Mirour* and of the *Confessio's virgines bonae dicendi peritae*, we will see how important Fear is to Marian rhetoric. To increase the persuasiveness of evil, the hellish family arranges for each daughter of Sin and Death to marry the World, another incestuous partnering in which each lady is espoused to her brother-in-law.<sup>61</sup> The polygamous wedding is opulent, with each of the Seven Deadly brides bearing lavish signs of their sinful identity; for instance, Pride enters on a lion and raises an eagle on her fist.<sup>62</sup> The train of Seven Deadly Sins offers an iniquitous counterpart not only to the seven virtues, who will appear later in the poem, but also to the seven maidens of the liberal arts in Martianus Capella's *Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, who also feature signs (though of disciplinary identity), such as Lady Grammar's sharp implements and poultices for cleansing the organs of speech. Unlike Lady Grammar, Lady Rhetoric, or Lady Logic, however, the Seven Deadly Sins are speechless at the marriage and do not convince humanity to join them. Humanity harkens from afar toward the celebration, but once again the Soul conquers the Flesh.<sup>63</sup>

From the union of the World with the Seven Deadly Sins, however, thirty-five hermaphroditic daughters capable of corrupting humanity emerge. Concerning the sexuality of these daughters, Gower writes that 'hermafrodite [...] / Ce sont quant double forme habite / Femelle et madle en un enfant' (A hermaphrodite occurs when a double form, female and male, inhabits one infant).<sup>64</sup> It is these thirty-five daughters who generate not more depraved children, but immoral rhetoric for the purpose of bringing all humanity to sin. Although Gower may have invented the incestuous allegory involving Sin and Death, he models the children of the Seven Deadly Sins on Gregory the Great's declaration in the *Moralia in Job* that the sins bore nine daughters, each of whom represents a different kind of wicked speech.<sup>65</sup> The hermaphroditic daughters of the Seven

60 MO, ll. 685–756.

61 MO, ll. 757–840.

62 MO, ll. 841–64.

63 MO, ll. 997–1008.

64 MO, ll. 1026, 1028–29.

65 Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, ed. by Marc Adraen (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), 143, 31.45, designates nine verbal sins as 'daughters' of the seven deadly sins: Pride/Boasting, Envy/Whispering and Backbiting, Anger/Insults, Outcries and Blasphemy, Avarice/Perjury, Gluttony/Scurrility and Loquacity. See Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 13.

Deadly Sins represent the end of the Devil's family line, but if (unlike their satanic great grandfather) their intersexuality does not enable continued reproduction, their patrilineage from the World allows them to — in a corruption of various art forms — apply the seven sins endowed by their mothers to human communications. The daughters of Pride and Lechery are especially prone to corrupt uses of language that compel others to follow the Devil's way, but each sin promotes abuses of speech. The eloquent Vainglory, offspring of Pride, is overdressed in both her person and her rhetorical style.<sup>66</sup> Her full sisters Presumption, who promulgates inaccurate teachings, and Boasting, whose main error is haughty language, should look to Solomon, the narrator notes, for a wise correction.<sup>67</sup> These sisters both reflect and encourage wicked speech in humankind. Among the children of Lechery, the multi-gendered Rape, with his false promises of marriage to young women or her seduction of young men, surpasses the rhetoric of Tully for evil purposes.<sup>68</sup> Rape's sister Adultery encourages unfaithful wives to lie and deploys shaming language in order to repress the cuckold's charges.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Envy's daughter Detraction ruins reputations with her malicious gossip, Anger's daughter Contention sharpens her tongue to spread contempt, Sloth's daughter Laziness does not bother to learn the Paternoster, Avarice's daughter Subtlety gives ruinous financial advice, and Gluttony's daughter Drunkenness composes licentious songs.<sup>70</sup> The habits of evil speech spread by the thirty-five hermaphroditic daughters succeed in deceiving, dividing, and degrading humankind. If, as we discussed in Chapter One, the Word is an *imago dei*, then the words promulgated by the thirty-five daughters tarnish the image of God in creation.

The thirty-five daughters act according to medieval codes of both masculine and feminine behaviour, and they are referred to with both masculine and feminine pronouns, because they are 'hermafrodite', recalling the myth of Hermaphroditus and his false eloquence.<sup>71</sup> Hermaphroditus is, after all, the son of Mercury, god of rhetoric, and Mercury's sister Venus, purveyor of seductive speech. Like the Devil, his son Death, and the thirty-five children of the Seven Deadly Sins in the *Mirour*, Hermaphroditus is a masculine and feminine body produced by an incestuous relationship and producing corrupt language. As David Rollo explains, a ninth-century

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66 At MO, ll. 1219–21, Vainglory looks for new ways to adorn her apparel: *La Veine gloire en son pais / Controve et fait novel devys / De vestir et apparailier*. At MO, l. 1253, she takes pride in the effects of *bealparler* (speaking well).

67 For Presumption, see MO, ll. 1525–1620; for Boasting, ll. 1729–2004.

68 MO, ll. 8677–80: *Ja Tullius qui plus habonde / Du Rethorique en sa faconde / Ne parle meulx / geu cil ne fait, / Ainçois q'il vierge ensi confonde [...]*.

69 MO, ll. 8785–8809.

70 MO, ll. 2617–28, 4045–56, 5557–68, 6373–84, 8149–50.

71 MO, l. 1026.

commentary by Remigius of Auxerre typifies the Western medieval association between Hermaphroditus and ornate, lascivious language.<sup>72</sup> There, Remigius, expostulating against Hermaphroditus's rhetorical style, calls Hermaphroditus 'eloquent' in what is 'a back-handed' compliment, according to Kim Zarins, since the son of Mercury is charged with stylistically embellished discourses that obscure the truth.<sup>73</sup> Having the features of both sexes would render Hermaphroditus 'over-endowed' by medieval grammatical theories associating proper syntax with heterosexual copulation.<sup>74</sup> One sample of such grammar theory would be Alan of Lille's *De planctu naturae* (c. 1165), which features Nature's complaint against same-sex unions and her comparison between them and poor grammar. In proper syntax, she insists, phrases link together easily, as when a man and woman make love, but 'homosexual' syntax errors conjoin mismatched parts in a failure to reproduce words or flesh. According to Nature's perspective, a hermaphroditic body, such as those of Hermaphroditus himself and the daughters of the Seven Deadly Sins, bears excessive features that create grammatical and rhetorical confusion. According to Gower, an abundance of elocutionary figures covers over discursive meaning, while Marian rhetoric, proceeding from a feminine body in which sexuality is controlled, would instead deploy ornaments of language sparingly to emphasize the truth.

As Zarins rightly points out, from a contemporary point of view the equation between intersex figures and riotous eloquence seems painfully dismissive of people whose genitalia differ from the average.<sup>75</sup> Zarins's work participates in an emerging field of scholars who are excavating the evidence for intersexuality and compassionate attitudes toward it in the Middle Ages.<sup>76</sup> Even if Gower believed himself to be treating mythological rather than actual bodies in referring to the 'hermafrodite', such a harsh judgement of sexual difference seems inconsistent with his humane treat-

72 David Rollo, *Kiss My Relics: Hermaphroditic Fictions of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 44–45. The commentary to which Rollo refers is *Remigii Autissiodorensis commentum in Martianum Capellam*, ed. by Cora E. Lutz, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1962–65), 1:108.

73 Kim Zarins, 'Intersex and the Pardoner's Body', *Accessus*, 4.1 (January 2018), 35. <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/accessus/vol4/iss1/2/>>.

74 Alan of Lille, for instance, compares bad syntax to anal penetration. See Alan of Lille, *The Plaint of Nature*, trans., by James J. Sheridan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1980), pp. 68, 133, 156–59, 162, 164, 186. See Jan Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille's Grammar of Sex: The Meaning of Grammar to a Twelfth-Century Intellectual* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1985).

75 Kim Zarins, 'Intersex and the Pardoner's Body', pp. 34–42.

76 See *Postmedieval*, 9.2 (2018) on 'Medieval Intersex, Language, and Hermaphroditism', guest edited by Ruth Evans with contributions by Jonathan Hsy, David Rollo, Leah DeVun, M. W. Bychowski, and Iain Morland.

ment of marginalized sexualities elsewhere.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, condemnation of biological form and corresponding behaviour would diminish Gower's kind refusal to pit virginal versus promiscuous women, Marys against Eves, in the *Mirour's* construction of Marian rhetoric. As we have seen, Gower reserves his most severe censures for the incestuous, and even then, he only gently disapproves of a case of sibling incest in the *Confessio's* 'Tale of Canace and Machaire', a text that will be read closely in this book's next chapter.<sup>78</sup> Hermaphroditus and Sin's thirty-five granddaughters with their hermaphroditic speech infractions are conceived through incest for maleficent purposes, and yet even their most troubling actions can be incorporated and transformed by a Marian rhetoric that expresses the truth in perfect syntax and tames excessive figures of speech.

In the *Mirour* and elsewhere, Gower humanizes sin by imploding binaries involving good versus evil, Mary versus the Devil's brood. By comparing the Virgin with Sin and her daughters, Gower shows that righteousness and wickedness exist in the same waters whose waves overlap until providentially, the Virgin's tide brings all to the new shore. As Patrick J. Gallacher expresses it: 'The similarity of vice to virtue suggests the ontological substratum of goodness even in an evil person or event. The similarity of virtue to the vice is a talisman of being which reinforces and draws out his potentiality for goodness.'<sup>79</sup> The Virgin's talismans include her relationship with God — like Sin, Mary is impregnated by her creator-parent — and her conception of a child who holds sway over creation. These likenesses do nothing to diminish Mary's moral authority, but rather show that as Empress of Heaven and Hell, the Virgin reigns over both good and evil, and as the figure of com-passion under the cross, she embraces all. Gower's deep faith in the Virgin and knowledge that nothing could vitiate her purity and love emboldened his assimilations between Mary and Sin, as well as her hermaphroditic granddaughters.

According to Zarins and Maria Bullón-Fernández, in the discourses and material arts surrounding Gower, Mary herself is sometimes figured as a hermaphrodite and thought to be capable like intersex bodies of bearing a child without carnal relations.<sup>80</sup> By regarding a gender-ambivalent Mary

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77 As an example of his openness to sexual difference, Gower treats lesbian affection sympathetically in the CA's 'Tale of Iphis and Ianthe'. See CA 4, ll. 451–505. For a discussion of this tale, see Watt, *Amoral Gower*, p. 28, pp. 73–76; M. W. Bychowski, 'Unconfessing Transgender: Dysphoric Youths and the Medicalization of Madness in John Gower's "Tale of Iphis and Ianthe"', *Accessus*, 3.1 (2016), <<http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&#x0026;context=accessus>>

78 CA 3, ll. 143–336.

79 Gallacher, *Love, the Word, and Mercury*, p. 31.

80 Kim Zarins, 'Intersex and the Pardoner's Body', p. 16, and María Bullón-Fernández, 'Gower's Queer Poetics in the *Mirour de l'Homme*', *Accessus*, 6.1 (2020): <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1041&context=accessus>>.

as his muse, Bullón-Fernández argues, Gower practises a queer poetics in the *Mirour*.<sup>81</sup> If, as Calin has suggested, '[i]n the *Mirour de l'Omme* salvation and wisdom are attained through a fusion or synthesis of the masculine and the feminine [...] leading to the integration of feminine personifications of virtue in the male [...] consciousness',<sup>82</sup> then such a fusion is first accomplished in the hermaphroditic characters in the devil's line and finally made holy by the Virgin's incorporation and feminine endowing of flesh to the masculine Christ. This sanctification deeply affects Gower's masculine narrator, who, in the final section of the *Mirour* (a major topic of Chapter Six), abandons his Baptist-like preaching and casts himself as a penitent seeking to transcend his own likeness to the Devil's household and identify more profoundly with Mary.<sup>83</sup> The narrator pitifully laments his internalization of all of the sins, making him 'plus ord, plus vil, plus fals, plus frele' (more filthy, more vile, more false, more frail) than any other, a corruption as dark as the incest producing the heterogeneous bodies in the Devil's line.<sup>84</sup> However, positioning himself as Mary's suitor, the narrator can also expect his failings to be transformed. The similarities between Mary and the Devil's lineage as well as the approximation of the narrator to the Seven Deadly Sins and their daughters remind us that representations of Sin and her progeny are not merely perversions of the Holy Family; they manifest themselves in and reflect a suffering humanity in need of mercy. That is why in the *Mirour de l'Omme* Mercy's speech before the divine court convinces God to create the *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* whose eloquence might deter humanity from Sin's temptations.<sup>85</sup>

The *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* arise from a nuptial narrative that responds to the marriage of the Seven Deadly Sins with the World. After Mercy rests her case, God decides to betroth his seven daughters (the Virtues) to Reason. As the first epistle of John — Gower's predominant New Testament source — declares, 'may [it] be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother'.<sup>86</sup> In the *Mirour*, under the direction of the Johannine narrator characterized in the previous chapter, whose model was believed to be the author of this epistle, the daughters of God have proceeded directly from the divine, in contrast

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Zarins cites a seventeenth-century sermon by John Wallis comparing the Virgin Birth to the procreative capacities of intersex people, and Bullón-Fernández finds in the Virgin Mary gender ambiguities that Gower embraces in the MO.

81 Bullón-Fernández, 'Gower's Queer Poetics'.

82 William Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 385.

83 MO, ll. 27361–27480.

84 Wilson, *Mirror*, p. 360, l. 27414.

85 MO, ll. 10045–56.

86 1 John 3. 10.

to the Devil's abusive procreation. Each of the Virtues is presented as a 'remedy against the seven deadly sins with their progeny':

Humility against Pride; Charity against Envy; Patience the silent against Anger the contentious; Prowess comes ready against Sloth the sleeping; Generosity the liberal against Avarice the grasping [...]. And then against Gluttony, the enemy of nature, comes the lady called Measure; and then against Lechery comes Chastity, beloved of God [...].<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, each Virtue and the five daughters eventually born to her acknowledge and purify the vice within; Humility's daughter Devotion, for instance, weeps for her own wickedness.<sup>88</sup> They are not so much combatants posed on one side of a battlefield as peacekeepers arrived to manage spiritual conflict, or to use another metaphor, antidotes concocted by the poison. When the Virtues marry Reason, they, too, like the Seven Deadly Sins, share one bridegroom, but Reason's marriage, in contrast to that of the World, is a modest and holy event. Reason wears the Virgin's colours (blue and white), and the Virtues in snowy robes bring into church only placards announcing their names, rather than expensive props related to their distinctiveness, as do the Sins.<sup>89</sup> In their purity and simplicity, the Virtues prefer a straightforward statement of their identity to a byzantine set of symbols that must be unpacked. They produce righteous daughters as they advance a simple oratory; many of these daughters are likenesses of the Virgin and models of Marian rhetoric.

While most of the Virtues in the *Mirour de l'Omme* suggest some aspect of righteous speech, the daughters of Humility and Chastity especially model a Marian rhetoric in contradistinction to the wicked talk of Pride's and Lust's hermaphroditic children. For the medieval devotee, the Virgin Mary embodies all the theological virtues, but especially humility and chastity. In the *Mirour* Gower expresses this Marian tenet by declaring the Virgin the humblest of humans and the prime exemplar of virginity;<sup>90</sup> in the *Confessio Amantis*, as will be seen later in this chapter, he reflects it by situating Marian orators in the books on pride and lust. In the *Mirour*, 'Our Lady was uniquely full of both virtues [humility and chastity]', 'John' claims, and his depictions of the *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* emphasize the same spiritual gifts.<sup>91</sup> For instance, Devotion, the first daughter of Humility, can be compared to the young Virgin's humble

87 Wilson, *Mirror*, pp. 138, 139, prose chapter summary before l. 10033; ll. 10129–10150.

88 MO, l. 10526: *Devocioun en ses prieres / Suspire et plourt [...]*.

89 MO, ll. 10093, 10105, 10129.

90 MO, ll. 12356–57, 16969.

91 MO, ll. 16885–87: *Mais nostre dame en sa manere / De l'un et l'autre fuist plenere, / Humblesce avoit et fuist virgine [...]*.



pursuit of scriptural study in the Temple or dedication to prayer in her chamber before the Annunciation. As scholars such as Laura Saetveit Miles demonstrate, the profundity of Mary's scriptural understanding and contemplation became a model for medieval believers in their daily devotionals.<sup>92</sup> Devotion, with her housemate *Oreisoun*, hides herself away for perusal and meditation so that Hypocrisy can enter neither 'son penser ne sa leçon' (their thought nor their divine lesson).<sup>93</sup> Devotion's conduct constitutes an *ars orandi* with the following principles:

Q'om doit orer seuleinement,	That one should pray alone,
Q'om doit orer pleinement,	That one should pray plainly / fully,
Q'om doit en lermes dieu prier,	That one should pray in tears to God,
Q'om doit orer humblement,	That one should pray humbly,
Q'om doit orer communement,	That one should pray in community,
Q'om doit aussi continuer,	That one should do all this continuously,
Q'om doit la bonne peas orer,	That one should pray for good peace,
Q'om doit par oreisouns aider	That through prayers one should aid
Son Roy, auci la morte gent,	The king and also the dead,
Q'om doit par priere allegger	That through prayer one should confess
Noz vices, tout ce puiss moustrer	Sins, all of this I can prove
Escript du viel essamplement. <sup>94</sup>	To be written in examples of old.

These lines address the holy manners involved in praying (privacy, modesty, directness, truthfulness) and a few subjects that one should bring before God (peace, the king, the dead, and sins for confession); nevertheless, since the devout entreat God about everything, such an *ars orandi* might apply holy manners to a wide array of topics and discourses.<sup>95</sup> Like Gower's ideal of a plain, ethical rhetoric that we studied in Chapter One and like Seneca, whom Gower cites on Devotion in the *Mirour*, the devout maiden 'Du plain penser plain mot dirra' (will speak the plain word of a plain thought).<sup>96</sup> When prayer abandons words in seeking God's will, its expressions come directly from a 'cuer' (heart) that is not distracted by foolish thoughts or speech.<sup>97</sup> As Gallacher observes concerning Devotion and her *ars orandi*, the 'requirement to be devout and the possibility of wordlessness make us reflect more deeply on the nature of truth in prayer,

<sup>92</sup> Miles, *The Virgin Mary's Book*.

<sup>93</sup> MO, I. 10200.

<sup>94</sup> MO, II. 10201–10212.

<sup>95</sup> MO, II. 10177–10836.

<sup>96</sup> MO, I. 10230.

<sup>97</sup> MO, I. 10384.

for the ideal proposes a [person] completely at one with [herself] — a harmony of emotions (or heart), speech, and mind.<sup>98</sup> This is the harmony expressed by the humble Virgin at the Annunciation as Gabriel discovers her in silent prayer and hears her short and simple answer that is trained on God's will. Humility's daughter Devotion is a counterpart of the Virgin in the concealment of her prayer chamber, a concealment read by Miles as a Foucauldian heterotopia that is both cloister and womb and also an open spiritual stage.<sup>99</sup> Like Mary, Devotion's attention inclines in God's direction, and her belief in a spiritually rewarding subjection recognizes providence. Her prayerful words model Marian brevity and concordance between the heart and the tongue, the creature and the creator.

Like her sister Devotion, Humility's second daughter, Fear, speaks in alignment with God and the Virgin Mary. As Gower states later in the *Mirour*, Fear and Modesty were the Virgin's two flowers at the Annunciation.<sup>100</sup> In addition to representing Mary's awe in conceiving the Word, Fear declares God's authority to countermand worldly power in expressions that might be compared to the *Magnificat*.<sup>101</sup> Fear's voice resounds like a trumpet ('cornette') and deters humanity from sin with its faithful blast:<sup>102</sup>

'Revien', ce dist, 'a la voiette,  
Qe ly malfiés ne te forsmette  
En la deserte regioun:  
Rettourne arere en ta maisoun,  
Et te submette a ta raisoun [...].'<sup>103</sup>

'Turn back', she cries, 'to the Way,  
So that evil might not exile you  
In the desert region:  
Return again to your home,  
And submit yourself to your reason [...].'

98 Gallacher, *Love, the Word, and Mercury*, p. 19.

99 Miles, *The Virgin Mary's Book*, pp. 41–55.

100 MO, ll. 16921–24: *Pour ce ly vierges q'est flori / Doit vergoigne et paour auci / En sa main destre toutdis prendre / Pour suppoer le corps de luy.*

101 MO, ll. 11540–42 quote from the *Magnificat* to indicate Fear's association with the Virgin Mary: *Du progenie en progenie / La mercy dieu leur ert impresse, / Qui criemont dieu en cest vie* (From generation to generation the Lord shows mercy to those who fear him, who cry to him in this life). The French passage in the MO is a rendering of Luke 1.48–50: *Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae; ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes. Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est, et sanctum nomen ejus, Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progeniestimentibus eum.*

102 MO, l. 11430.

103 MO, ll. 11432–36.

Fear, whose father is Reason, shepherds the sinner to a spiritual home with her terrifying rhetoric, similar to the Virgin's preaching in the *Magnificat* that God, 'whose mercy is on those who fear him', 'has shown strength with his arm', 'has scattered the proud', and 'put down the mighty'.<sup>104</sup>

Linking Fear and the other daughters of Humility to Knowledge, Gower quotes Bede in saying that humility is 'la clief' (the key) to the pursuit of knowledge.<sup>105</sup> The daughter of Prowess, Knowledge is responsible for defending the conscience and the will, aiding reason through memory, archiving the present and the past, and foreseeing the future.<sup>106</sup> In medieval traditions these are Mary's roles in the days between the Ascension and Pentecost as she shores up the faith of the disciples, reminds them of Jesus's teachings or prophecy, and encourages perseverance in the Way. These roles are often depicted in books of hours as Mary leads the apostles in prayer or reads to them from scripture as the Holy Spirit descends, and Gower acknowledges them later in the *Mirour* by emphasizing the Virgin's full awareness of what would happen at Pentecost.<sup>107</sup> Sobered by similar duties, Knowledge 'ne parle du frivole' (does not speak of frivolity), just as Mary at the Visitation does not chatter with her cousin Elizabeth, but bursts forth in the *Magnificat*.<sup>108</sup>

Beyond the daughters of Humility and the figure of Knowledge, to which Humility is the key, the daughters of Chastity exemplify Marian rhetoric. Chastity's first daughter, Good Care, restricts her mouth and throat from lustful singing or speaking.<sup>109</sup> Enforcing Marian humility, brevity, and modesty, Good Care '[l]a langue tient comme en gayole' (reins in her language as if it were in gaol), with Reason standing guard.<sup>110</sup> Leaping from the metaphor of a prison to one of seaports, the passage on Good Care warns that the sinner who does not control the tongue has a mouth that blows its ship to an evil harbour.<sup>111</sup> Such a one requires the *Stella Maris* of Marian rhetoric. Chastity's second daughter, Virginity, speaks and reacts with modesty and fear to those who might address her, just as the Virgin had at the Annunciation.<sup>112</sup> In fact, according to the

104 Luke 1.50–52.

105 MO, l. 12451.

106 MO, ll. 14593–15096.

107 See for instance books of hours held at the Morgan Library in New York City: MS M 1052, fol. 59<sup>v</sup> or MS M 1027, fol. 19<sup>f</sup>. The passage concerning Mary's full understanding of the events that would occur at Pentecost occur at MO, ll. 29293–29304.

108 MO, l. 14608.

109 MO, ll. 16609–32.

110 MO, l. 16632.

111 MO, ll. 16648–49: *La bouche souffle a malvois port, / Quant des folditz fait son report.*

112 Virginity is expressed in *vergoigne et paour* at MO, l. 16971, attributes that compare her to Mary at the Annunciation. See MO, ll. 16972–74: *Vergoigne et paour ot Marie, / Quant l'angre de la dieu partie, / La dist 'Ave'! soulainement.*

*Mirour*, chastity is grounded in the Marian rhetoric of a sacred vow.<sup>113</sup> Continence, the fourth daughter of Chastity, represents this principle as she counteracts Incest, the deplorable sexual practice that spawned all of Sin's children. If anyone breaks her vow of Chastity, Continence shows the way to repentance.<sup>114</sup> After the narrator has finished describing all five daughters of Chastity, he bursts forth in a sample of Marian *rhetorica plena*; because Chastity is the 'plus privé / Al alme' (closest to the soul), his spirit surfaces in passionate anaphora to praise these *virgines bonae dicendi peritae*.<sup>115</sup> 'O Chasteté', he repeats three times in a Trinitarian charm, 'Quoy dirrai plus mais dieus t'onure? / Car autre a ce n'est qui suffice'. (What more might I say, but that God honours you? / There is not another who is enough for Him.)<sup>116</sup>

Devotion, Fear, Knowledge, Virginity and Continence are but five of the *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* issuing from the Virtues' espousal of Reason, especially from the matrilineages of Humility and Chastity. Gower's resort to nuptial narratives involving complex gender relations reminds us once again of his debt to *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury* and other liberal arts textbooks that inculcate values leading to secular marriage or spiritual marriage within the church. As Christopher Cannon notes concerning the moral lessons absorbed from medieval handbooks,

When the basic reading texts look beyond the boundaries of the schoolroom, their gaze is very narrow in social terms, focusing on marriage above all [...] the real object of such training must have been the schoolboy's emergent sexuality, and the view spread throughout these texts is that marriage is the only social field in which to channel such desire.<sup>117</sup>

Among these textbooks are the *Distichs of Cato* and the *Fables* of Avianus from which, Cannon points out, medieval children learned ways of both construing Latin and governing the tongue, approaches that correspond to Gower's warnings in the *Mirour de l'Omme*, *Vox Clamantis*, and elsewhere. For instance, *Distichs* 1.27 warns against 'sermo blandus' (flattery) and the *Fables* II.8 against 'perfida lingua' (deceitful tongue),<sup>118</sup> both classifications of sinful speech exemplified in the *Mirour* by the fifth daughter of Envy,

<sup>113</sup> Chastity and her women make a vow at MO, l. 17834: *Q'ad fait le vou du chastité*.

<sup>114</sup> MO, ll. 17769–72: *Combien q'il soient desflouri / S'ils puis en soient repentant / Sanz estre jammais resorti / Dieus mesmes le tient a guari / Car Continence est lour garant*.

<sup>115</sup> MO, ll. 18325–26.

<sup>116</sup> The invocation to Chastity occurs at MO, ll. 18337, 18349, and 18361. The quotation on how God honours Chastity is in MO, ll. 18371–72.

<sup>117</sup> Christopher Cannon, *From Literacy to Literature: England 1300–1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 171.

<sup>118</sup> Cannon, *From Literacy to Literature*, pp. 170–71.

False Semblance, and her servant Two-Tongued.<sup>119</sup> Gower, like other fourteenth-century authors, quotes from the *Distichs* more often than from any other school text.<sup>120</sup> As warnings concerning the regulation of the tongue are adapted from the *Distichs* and sprinkled across the *Mirour de l'Omme*, they participate in what Vincent Gillespie calls a 'portable piety', emerging from texts that may be rearranged and reproduced for ethical and moral teaching.<sup>121</sup> In the *Mirour* Gower's chief rearrangement consists in reproducing lessons ordinarily delivered by schoolmasters through the examples and expressions of the *virgines bonae dicendi peritae*.

A pious handbook that brings together language instruction with a focus on marriage is John of Garland's *Epithalamium Beate Virginis Marie*, a long narrative poem teaching each of the liberal arts through episodes in the Virgin's life, the most important episode being her nuptials with Christ. Like Philip of Harvenge, Garland saw *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury* through exegesis on the Song of Songs in which the Virgin is bride and Christ is bridegroom. As E. Faye Wilson suggested long ago, Garland's *Epithalamium* was known in Chaucer and Gower's circles, the valentine poems of both fourteenth-century authors revealing their familiarity. These poems, Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* and Gower's *Cinkante Balades*, XXXIII and XXXV, are indebted to the *Epithalamium*'s scene of the 'curia avium', a court of birds situated in a lovers' paradise.<sup>122</sup> In the *Mirour de l'Omme*, Gower relies not on Edenic landscapes and portrayals of creation as he did in the *Balades*, but rather on the major scheme of Garland's *Epithalamium*, on a holy wedding that empowers personified virtues. In the *Epithalamium* the Virgin's marriage to Christ allows the Virtues to return to earth after they had been driven off by the Vices proceeding from Mother Eve. In the *Mirour* Virtues representing Marian values marry so that humankind can be released from vice. Gower's characterization of Prowess especially reminds the reader of Garland's Virgin, victorious bride, routing the Vices that have infiltrated all aspects of human life.<sup>123</sup> Garland inveighs against political and church leaders who exhibit these vices in thirteenth-century England and France. This movement from an allegory of Vices to contemporary critique suggests to Gower the *Mirour*'s programme of satirizing the estates that are dishonoured by

119 MO, ll. 3493–3504, 3529–3564.

120 Cannon, *From Literacy to Literature*, p. 186.

121 Vincent Gillespie, 'From the Twelfth Century to c. 1450', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson, 9 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2, p. 156.

122 Evelyn Faye Wilson, 'A Study of the Epithalamium in the Middle Ages: An Introduction to the *Epithalamium beate Marie virginis* by John of Garland' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, 1930), pp. 302–04. Garland's 'curia avium' spins off of Alan of Lille's depiction of the 'council of animals' depicted upon Nature's robe in the *De planctu naturae*.

123 MO, ll. 15097–180.

association with Sin's progeny immediately after the nuptial sections of the narrative.<sup>124</sup> For Garland and then for Gower, only a pure marriage that transcends incestuous coupling and reproduces holy speech can overcome the ills of the world. For Garland, that is the espousal of the Virgin with Christ; for Gower, that is the partnering of Marian Virtues with Reason. In the conclusion of the *Mirour de l'Omme* (to be discussed in Chapter Six) Gower, like Garland, will describe the Virgin as Christ's lover and spouse, though he reserves an actual wedding scene for the Sins and then the spiritually transformative and well-spoken Marian Virtues.<sup>125</sup> Acknowledging Garland's *Epithalamium* as a source for the *Mirour* and the Marian qualities of the *Mirour's* Virtues helps us see that the Virgin Mary is a continuous undercurrent in Gower's text, not merely the subject of a hagiographical conclusion. Gower's Virtues, personifying the Virgin's various graces, marry Reason, God's agent, in the same way that Garland's Virgin, incorporating all of the Virtues, marries Jesus, God's son.

Gower's emphasis on Reason is the key to understanding his version of Marian rhetoric. Whereas the wedding of the Seven Deadly Sins and the World produces children who cast their evil into human situations to cultivate wicked approaches to communication, the daughters of the Virtues create true speech arts by applying good qualities to Reason and developing righteous linguistic principles. Since Reason represents a divine intellectual attribute that brings the mind into accordance with God's law, Reason's gift to the *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* allows them to bring their Marian virtue to speech in accordance with God's providence. The *ars orandi* attached to the description of Devotion which we have already explored provides a paradigm for these reasonable Marian principles. There, Gower states that a

heart discordant with its tongue is not concordant with God in prayer — but only if the heart and tongue are together. When the tongue records the thought, and the thought moves the heart to repentance, then it is praying devoutly to God [...].<sup>126</sup>

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124 In the *Epithalamium*, Book 1 portrays the sins proceeding from Eve, and Book 2 discusses their manifestation in humankind. In the MO, the first part deals with the conception of the sins, while parts three through eight contain the estates satire.

125 Gower implies in MO, ll. 29399–400 that the love between Mary and Christ is so great that it cannot be adequately described by worldly or even paradisaical metaphors such as marriage. He says, *Ne tous les seintz de paradis / N'en porront conter la covine*. Nevertheless, while he tells of the Assumption, he declares that the Virgin arrives triumphantly in heaven to become Christ's spouse (ll. 29701–60). See especially MO, l. 29736, with its culminating expression on the espousal of Christ and the Virgin (and attendant pun on Mary's name): *L'espouse ovesque son mary*.

126 Wilson, *Mirror*, p. 143, ll. 10393–96.

Although applied solely to prayer in the sacred chamber of Devotion, the production of an oration acceptable to God can be compared to Gower's description of the construction of good rhetoric in Book 7 of the *Confessio Amantis*. As noted in Chapter One, Gower insists on an accord between heart and tongue that yields truthful speech, and he adheres to an Aristotelian psychology of rhetoric in which the affections operating on the human will move the reason. At Devotion's altar the tongue articulates a contrite thought that makes the heart sad and inspires sensible speech and behaviour (repentance), an operation of the affect on the will to motivate godly words. Chapter One noted the variety of instances throughout Gower's corpus in which the emotional valence of speech encourages the intellect to reach rational conclusions and aspire to ethical behaviours. The difference between the *Confessio Amantis*'s lecture on 'Rethorique' and the *Mirour de l'Omme*'s presentation of Marian rhetoric is that a female personification of virtue infuses holy emotions, such as mystical love or fear of God, into the tongue and accomplishes what well-regarded bishops, lawyers, and merchants whom Gower satirizes in all of his major works have been unable to do. All of these leaders, characterized unanimously as men in the third through eighth parts of the *Mirour*, have been unable to resist the sweet talk of Sin's hermaphroditic granddaughters.<sup>127</sup> Just as Mary is believed to advocate effectively for sinners at the court of judgement when no one else can plead for them, the *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* in the *Mirour de l'Omme* commit their virtues to releasing humanity from the Devil by means of their Marian rhetoric. If humankind were to imitate the blessed patterns of speech of the Virtues and their daughters, no vicious rhetoric could corrupt the soul.

### **The *Virgo bona dicendi perita* in the *Confessio Amantis***

While in the *Mirour de l'Omme*, Gower offers his own brand of Marian rhetoric, in the *Confessio Amantis*, he illustrates it through the oratory of two maidens, Peronelle and Thaise. Devotion, Fear, Knowledge, Virginity, and Continence in the service of Reason and by means of special stylistic adornments characterize the speech of these two Marian figures. Peronelle is the heroine of 'The Tale of Three Questions' in Book 1 on pride, and Thaise is the brilliant daughter of the eponymous hero in 'The Tale of Apollonius of Tyre', the main exemplum against lechery in Book 8.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>127</sup> MO, ll. 18421–26964.

<sup>128</sup> On the relationships of these heroines with their fathers, see María Bullón-Fernández, *Fathers and Daughters in Gower's Confessio Amantis: Authority, Family, State, and Writing* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000). Also, Peter Goodall, 'John Gower's "Apollonius of Tyre":

As fictional characters constructed to teach Amans humility and chastity in love, respectively, Peronelle and Thaise represent the virtues most associated with Marian rhetoric in the *Mirour de l'Omme*. Bullón-Fernández points out rightly, however, that these two young women are so much more than personifications of Marian virtue; through their avoidance of incest and commanding language they are agents of healing and peace in both spiritual and political matters.<sup>129</sup> Their magnificent speeches occur when the powerful men around them, including their fathers stripped of protective powers, are unable to resolve deep conflicts or respond to dangerous events threatening body and soul.<sup>130</sup> Peronelle and Thaise defend their own integrity and restore their fathers' lives and dignity by means of Marian rhetoric.<sup>131</sup>

Gower models these *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* in the *Confessio* on the sapient young Virgin and on the Virgin intercessor for humanity in heaven's court.<sup>132</sup> Like the child Mary studying in the temple, Thaise secures her virginity in the protection of a school, and she relies on her

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"Confessio Amantis", Book VIII', *Southern Review*, 15 (1982), 243–53; Donavin, *Incest Narratives*; Gary Lim, 'Constructing the Virtual Family: Socializing Grief in John Gower's "Apollonius of Tyre"', *Exemplaria*, 22 (2010), 326–48.

129 Bullón-Fernández, *Fathers and Daughters*, pp. 42–45.

130 I intend to make clear in this chapter how Peronelle and Thaise, through their commendable oratory, are the Marian intercessors of their tales who make the salvation of male figures possible. I am especially grateful to Linda Barney Burke for initiating a feminist strand of scholarship that excavates Gower's positive treatment of women. See Linda Barney Burke, 'Women in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', *Mediaevalia*, 3 (1977), 238–59. More recently, Burke has situated Gower in feminist traditions supported by Christine de Pizan. See Linda Barney Burke, "'The Voice of One Crying': John Gower, Christine de Pizan, and the Tradition of Elijah the Prophet", in *Gower in Contexts: Scribal, Linguistic, Literary and Socio-historical Readings*, ed. by Laura Filardo-Llamas, Brian Gastle, and Marta Gutiérrez Rodríguez, special issue of *ES Revista de Filología Inglesa*, 33.1 (Valladolid: University of Valladolid Publications, 2012), 117–35. There is certainly another strain in Gower criticism that minimizes the effect of Gower's maidens in the *Confessio Amantis*. For instance, commenting on the role of Thaise's mother and of Peronelle, Elliot Kendall argues that they are both self-effacing characters who merely re-inscribe the hierarchies inherent in great households. See Elliot Kendall, *Lordship and Literature: John Gower and the Politics of the Great Household* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). According to Kendall, 'The agency of the princess of Pentapolis and of Peronelle conforms to a discursive structure which will deny them power' (p. 157). Similarly, in 'Writing, Gender and Power in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*' (*Exemplaria*, 20 [2008], 28–47) Amanda M. Leff, although she deploys feminist theory, argues that 'Gower's women [...] do not subvert the social hierarchy, but simply seek more favorable positions within it' (p. 43). I would argue, in contrast, that it is through the Marian rhetoric of Peronelle and Thaise that societies and individuals are upheld and transformed.

131 See Bullón-Fernández, *Fathers and Daughters*, pp. 42–75.

132 As Peronelle and Thaise align with the Virgin's intellectual and moral qualities, they connect with a fourteenth-century impulse, identified in Chaucer by Ryan Perry, that sought to balance affective piety with demonstrations of reason and spiritual understanding. See Ryan Perry, "'Thynk on God, as we doon, men that swynke': The Cultural Locations of



learning to release her father from a hell of despair; like Mary's mediation at the court of judgement, Peronelle uses her integrity and wit in a verbal display that saves her father from a king's condemnation. In both narratives the fathers are figures of a sinful humanity that in the *Mirour de l'Omme* is rescued by the Marian Virtues. In addition, the fathers represent the threat of incest, since their private consultations with their daughters take place in scenes suggesting the gardens of romance literature (as with Petro and Peronelle) or danger and sexual violence (as with Apollonius and Thaise).<sup>133</sup> Both Peronelle and Thaise attain Knowledge through practices modelled in the *Mirour* by Devotion, and like Fear, they speak boldly in threatening circumstances from this cache of wisdom. In addition, both exemplify Virginité and Continence: Peronelle is compared to the Virgin at the Annunciation and Thaise is positioned as Continence's advocate against incest. The power inherent in these young women derives from their deployment of speech associated with Mary and her virtuous counterparts in the *Mirour de l'Omme*: a *rhetorica plena* that arises from strong and holy emotions and leads its listeners to the righteous way.

The faithful Marian maiden and persuasive orator Peronelle turns potential tragedy to divine romantic comedy through her prudent speech in 'The Tale of Three Questions'. Because of her ability to alter both discursive and human conditions through her rhetoric, Steele Nowlin declares that Peronelle 'is not [merely] a representation of invention; she is an inventor'.<sup>134</sup> The tale opens with King Alphonse of Spain, who believes that wisdom consists in 'strange interpretaciouns' and debates on abstruse questions.<sup>135</sup> Ordinarily, he can best anyone in a verbal contest, but one of his knights, Don Petro, can resolve any problem that the king puts to him. Adding envy of his knight to pride in being clever, King Alphonse plots to 'confounde' Petro's 'wittes'.<sup>136</sup> The king presents the following tripartite riddle that Petro must answer on pain of death: 1) What needs the least help from humankind but receives the most? 2) What is worth the most but costs the least to keep? 3) What costs the most and is worth the least?<sup>137</sup> These questions revolve around paradoxes that require an answer

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the *Meditations of the Supper of Our Lord* and the Middle English Pseudo-Bonaventurian Tradition', *Speculum*, 86.2 (April 2011), 419–54.

133 See Donavin, *Incest Narratives*, p. 54; Larry Scanlon, 'The Riddle of Incest: John Gower and the Problem of Medieval Sexuality', in *Re-Visioning Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998), pp. 93–127; Bullón-Fernández, 'Fathers and Daughters', pp. 56–58, 68–69.

134 Steele Nowlin, *Chaucer, Gower, and the Affect of Invention* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2016), p. 120.

135 CA 1, l. 3070.

136 CA 1, l. 3093.

137 On the riddle in 'The Tale of the Three Questions' and its potential sources see James T. Bratcher, 'Gower's 'Tale of Three Questions' and 'The Clever Peasant Girl' Folktale'. *Notes*

by a representative of the Virgin Mary, queen of all paradoxes, mother of her own creator. Alphonse, whose concept of wisdom is limited and self-serving, is about to learn from an imitator of the Seat of Wisdom, of Mother Mary with the Word in her lap. In the end, Alphonse is dazzled by a well-spoken virgin and convinced by her irrefutable logic to wed her in a marriage that represents the virtues' triumph over vice.

When Alphonse poses the challenge to Petro, however, the king is ruthless and rash. Alphonse grants his knight three weeks to solve three riddles or lose both life and livelihood; threes multiply in this tale in an allusion to the Trinity, whose influence will eventually transform the king. Truly confounded, Petro leaves the court in despair and wracks his brains at home. Concerning Petro's confusion, Schieberle makes the interesting point that he might have known the answer to Alphonse's riddles, but feared shaming the king with correct responses that would identify Alphonse's failings.<sup>138</sup> Meanwhile, his youngest daughter, Peronelle, who at fourteen is 'full of grace', 'lich to an hevenely figure', 'with humble herte', and of 'goodli speche', notices her father's agony.<sup>139</sup> Peronelle is the same age as the Virgin when in the Protoevangelium of James and popular narratives she emerges from the temple school, pledges her faith to Joseph, and experiences the Annunciation.<sup>140</sup> In other words, Peronelle is cresting in her imitation of the Virgin and ability to accept the challenges of an Annunciation: endowed with God's grace and an angelic nature, she is prepared for providential news; modest and well-spoken, she is equipped to reply faithfully to it. Her father's anguish is difficult to bear, but as a Marian intercessor amidst a Marian scene of an enclosed garden, she expresses hope and pleads with him to allow her to help. Her challenge, like that of every good rhetorician according to Gower, is to move the listener's will through appropriate emotions to reach a rational conclusion, and she does so by repeatedly pointing to their family ties, speaking in a strong iambic rhythm, and crying 'merci' more times than the narrator can count. In her *rhetorica plena* Peronelle activates Petro's will to hear her by calling him 'fader' four times in fifteen short lines, a stylistic reminder of their close relationship in which he trusts her more than her sister or brother and often 'telle[s] a privité' to her that he would conceal from all others.<sup>141</sup> The strong iambic rhythm in which she recalls their closeness establishes an expectation of continuity — in both the meter and their

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and *Queries*, 53 (2006), 409–10; Curtis Gruenler, 'How to Read Like a Fool: Riddle Contests and the Banquet of Conscience in *Piers Plowman*', *Speculum*, 85.3 (2010), 596–98.

138 Misty Schieberle, 'Feminized Counsel', p. 46.

139 CA 1, ll. 3397, 3136, 3146, 3137.

140 According to Gallacher, 'The many references in the story to *grace* are an additional corroboration of the Annunciation allusion. See Gallacher, 'Love, the Word, and Mercury', p. 40.

141 CA 1, ll. 3153–58 (3157).

bond of trust.<sup>142</sup> Invoking the paternal emotions that will honour her filial piety, she demonstrates Marian compassion by weeping in response to her father's sorrow, and 'evere among merci she cride' until Petro pities Peronelle as he pities himself.<sup>143</sup> 'Merci' is Mary's predominant appeal. Desiring to make a Marian intercession, Peronelle convinces Petro not only to reveal his difficulties to her, but also to allow her to resolve them; she persuades him of the words that Schieberle uses for the title of her article on this tale, that 'ofte schal a womman have / Thing which a man mai noght areche'.<sup>144</sup>

In response, 'The fader herde his dowhter speche / And thoghte ther was *resoun* inne [...]'.<sup>145</sup> We know from the *Mirour de l'Omme* that Reason marries all the Virtues, but Gower especially emphasizes the good judgement and mental acumen of the daughters of Humility and Chastity, Peronelle among them. As she accompanies her father back to court, Peronelle's reasonable discourse, supported by appropriate Marian emotions, continues to overcome evil and the threat of death. When she approaches Alphonse to answer for her father, Peronelle, like the Virgin Mary in the face of God's ire, ensures that the king's 'wrathtis is overgo' and that his mind is open to sensible words.<sup>146</sup> "Mi liege lord, so as I can", / Quod sche, "the pointz of whiche I herde, / Thei schul of *reson* ben ansuerde".<sup>147</sup> Her wit enthralls and moves him to first love dearly and then to think clearly. According to Schieberle, 'Gower implies that [Peronelle] can better answer Alphonse's riddles because women's assumed submissive position in society allows her certain strategies not as readily available to her father'.<sup>148</sup> For instance, falling to her knees and underscoring her humility, Peronelle can woo Alphonse into agreement and call upon him to heed her advice.<sup>149</sup> When she delivers the answers to the riddle, she remarks that she has 'be *resoun* sein', and Alphonse understands all that she says by '*reson*'.<sup>150</sup>

Her answers deliver teachings associated with the Virgin in the *Mirour de l'Omme*, teachings on creation, humility, and pride. What needs the least help from humankind but receives the most? The earth, which farmers till and humanity builds up, yet does not require assistance in generating the blessings of creation or the destruction of death. What is

142 CA 1, ll. 3147–62.

143 CA 1, l. 3167.

144 CA 1, ll. 3167, 3206–7. See Misty Schieberle, 'Thing Which a Man Mai Noght Areche', pp. 91–109.

145 CA 1, ll. 3208–09, emphasis mine.

146 CA 1, l. 3325.

147 CA 1, ll. 3244–46, emphasis mine.

148 Schieberle, *Feminized Counsel*, p. 48.

149 Schieberle, *Feminized Counsel*, p. 50.

150 CA 1, ll. 3266, 3322, emphases mine.

worth the most but costs the least to keep? Humility, which the Trinity endowed first and foremost to the Virgin Mary and which is satisfied with humble circumstances. What costs the most and is worth the least? Pride, which cost humanity its prelapsarian affinity with God and yields only continued sin.<sup>151</sup> To move the will to an understanding of these answers, Peronelle exploits the frustration of ‘men [who the earth] delve and dych’, promotes the love that God invests in the humble, and evinces disgust with pride.<sup>152</sup> Although the first answer about the bounty of creation is suitable for the mother of her creator, the second and third answers are most self-reflexively Marian.

They are also the most invested in Marian *repetitiones*, reiterations of religious sources and replications of phrasing that reproduce holy thoughts. The discourses on humility and pride repeat an answer to a riddle posed in the *Mirour*’s summation on Marian humility, refer to Mary’s lifelong replication of Gabriel’s announcements, and show that Alphonse’s clever challenge can be solved with oft-repeated tenets of Christianity that are especially borne out in the Virgin.<sup>153</sup> In the *Confessio Amantis*’s redeployment of the riddle from the *Mirour de l’Omme*, Gower recaps the virtues that inhere in Marian rhetoric and the purest ways of conveying them; in allusions to the Annunciation, he situates Peronelle as another form of the Virgin; and in Peronelle’s comprehension of the king’s logic, he uses recurring theological commonplaces to reveal that Alphonse’s intellectual challenge to her father is not original, but part of lessons in Christian life passed down for generations. As Peronelle solves Alphonse’s verbal puzzles made of fragments of reiterated truths, she transforms his arrogance to love by knitting a comely verbal cloth with various forms of *repetitio* and assorted stylistic gems suited to her modest ethos. A special kind of *repetitio* involved in smoothing and binding this cloth is alliteration, as in the first answer’s reliance on *m* and *w* for a description of ‘monnes’ work — ‘Als wel in wynter as in Maii / The monnes hond doth what he mai [...]’. — or in the second answer’s use of *h* for ‘humilité’ — ‘Of that He knew hir humble entente, / His oghne sone adoun He sent’ — or in the third answer’s use of *h* again to show what Lucifer had lost — ‘Whan he for Pride hath hevene lost [...]’.<sup>154</sup> In addition to alliteration, another prominent means of sonic repetition associated with Peronelle is *rime riche*, couplets rhyming in homonyms. According to Zarins, Peronelle ‘is not only described with *rime riche* but speaks it’, a strategy through which

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<sup>151</sup> CA 1, ll. 3247–314.

<sup>152</sup> CA 1, l. 3256.

<sup>153</sup> MO, ll. 12601–612.

<sup>154</sup> CA 1, ll. 3253–4, 3279–80, 3302.

the heroine gains authority and proves her verbal acumen.<sup>155</sup> In the answer on humility, for instance, Peronelle, with direct address to the proud king, advises that this virtue ‘costeth lest a man to kepe, / Mi lord, if ye woll take kepe’.<sup>156</sup> Through the sonic repetition of ‘kepe’, Peronelle underscores the spiritual economy of ‘keeping’ humility, a virtue that Alphonse can maintain only if he ‘takes keep’ of the young lady’s words.

Peronelle’s elocutionary style follows the principles taught by the Marian Virtues in the *Mirour*: she speaks simply and forthrightly, her language a clear and often recurrent conduit for a moral lesson and her heart concordant with her tongue. As Claire Banchich has argued, Peronelle, like the Virgin, is moved by ‘timor dei’, although her posture is fearlessness itself.<sup>157</sup> With a speech in Alphonse’s court that is forged by her own Marian sagacity and integrity, Peronelle’s ‘eloquent plainness’ reflects Gower’s investment in the *rhetorica plena*, ornamented only in accordance with the truth.<sup>158</sup> Peronelle communicates a lesson on creation, humility, and pride with an uncomplicated structure of claim, amplification, and conclusion, a structure recommended to Gower in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, as we saw in Chapter One. ‘The earth it is [...]’; ‘it is humilité [...]’; ‘I telle it, Pride’, are the direct answers that begin a brief homily on the topic.<sup>159</sup> Within the straightforward construction, the *repetitiones* in diction, sound, and meter that we have noted flesh out the lesson at hand and the speaker’s Marianism in preaching it.

Beyond these *repetitiones*, Gower experiments with embedding phrases in lines so that the syntax imitates the Virgin’s pregnancy with the Christ child. Peronelle crafts grammatical phrases and word placement in such a way as to invoke Mary’s motherhood and invest her own speech with the Word. Parenthetical nesting of prepositional phrases and the anadiplosis-like placement of the word ‘humility’ verbally re-enact the Virgin’s nesting of the Christ child in her womb:

I seie it is humilité,  
Thurgh which the hihe Trinité  
As for decerte of pure love  
Unto Marie from above,  
Of that He knew hire humble entente,  
His oghne sone adoun He sente,  
Above alle othre and hire He ches

155 Kim Zarins, ‘Rich Words: Gower’s *Rime Riche* in Dramatic Action’, in *John Gower: Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation and Tradition*, ed. by Elisabeth Dutton, with John Hines and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), p. 250.

156 CA 1, ll. 3273–4.

157 Banchich, ‘Holy Fear and Poetics’, pp. 188–215.

158 Banchich, ‘Holy Fear and Poetics’, p. 206.

159 CA 1, ll. 3251, 3275, 3297.

For that vertu which bodeth pes.  
 So that I may be resoun calle  
 Humilité most worth of alle.<sup>160</sup>

While the first line of this discourse places the word 'humilité' at the end of the verse, the final line places it at the beginning in a prosodic pun on 'the first will be last and the last will be first', Jesus's teaching on the spiritual reward for humility.<sup>161</sup> Bracketing the beginning and ending of Peronelle's second answer, 'humilité' creates a container for the Word, and various prepositional phrases nest within that container. For example, the entire line 'Unto Marie from above' is a double prepositional phrase enveloped inside a longer syntactical unit and reflective of Mary's nurturing of the Word that comes from above.

Providing her final response to the tripartite riddle and swaying her audience from Pride, Peronelle produces an answer that was always already constructed, not just in the mind and comportment of the conceited king who formed a verbal challenge for Petro, but also, and more significantly, in the creative and salvific intent of God, which might be made manifest only in a woman. In other words, the final answer, as well as the two preceding it, does not actually depend upon the riddle, but is another pronouncement of the Word through the virgin 'I seie'. In the discourse on pride, maiden *pronunciatio* is especially underscored in Peronelle's ten articulations of the key word, the most extensive example of *repetitio* in any of Peronelle's speeches, here as a way to sermonically hammer home a warning against arrogance. Just as in Peronelle's homily on humility, the key word 'pride' comes last in the first line, even though it is the grammatical subject of its clause.<sup>162</sup> In this way, Peronelle establishes a parallel between pride and humility, just as the *Mirour de l'Omme* makes one the impure counterpart of the other. When Peronelle wishes to establish pride as the first of sins, she places the word instead at the front of the line, as in 'Pride is the cause of alle wo', or 'Pride is the heved of all sinne', or 'Pride is of every mis the pricke / Pride is the werste of alle wicke'.<sup>163</sup> In his *English Grammar*, which will be discussed in the final chapter of this book, Ben Jonson uses the couplet just cited as a particularly effective use of isocolon.<sup>164</sup> Peronelle warns against pride by rendering the word not only as the ruling nominative of its own clauses and the ur-subject of sin, but also as an ominous moral threat in every declension. 'Pride' is

160 CA 1, ll. 3275–84.

161 Matthew 19. 30.

162 CA 1, l. 3297.

163 CA 1, ll. 3306, 3309, 3311–12.

164 C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, corrected edition, 11 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 8, p. 455.

the accusative object when she explains what Lucifer bears and the dative when she outlines what Adam would do 'for Pride'.<sup>165</sup> These examples in all cases induce fear and drive the audience, even the prideful Alphonse, away from sin. As Banchich demonstrates, *timor dei* is the guiding and controlling emotion of the *Confessio*'s Book 1, in which Gower announces through one of the Latin verses that he will speak 'per os timide' (through a fearful mouth).<sup>166</sup> Moved by *timor dei* and benefitting from Peronelle's holy rhetoric, Alphonse 'fond so muchel grace'.<sup>167</sup>

After Peronelle provides the correct answers to the tripartite riddle, King Alphonse delivers her father from 'gilt'.<sup>168</sup> Having asked for the king's 'grace' and 'justice', she has completed her Marian intercession. Even more, she has drawn Alphonse away from excessive self-love and toward regard for another: toward herself, the Marian virtues she represents, and the beautiful speech in which she characterizes them. In Book 1's scheme of confessing Amans of pride, Peronelle has performed the desired transformation in Alphonse. The promise of their happy marriage concludes Book 1's sermons against pride. Once again, nuptials are the sign that the Virgin's qualities, married to the godhead and manifested in the Word, will reign in humankind's thought and language.

The *Confessio Amantis*'s second *virgo bona dicendi perita*, Thaise, appears in the final exemplum on lechery in Book 8. Peronelle and Thaise are culminating figures, the former at the end of the *Confessio*'s first book and the latter near the end of its last, providing something akin to an *incipit* and *explicit* for a climactic Marian rhetoric that sums up teachings on humility and chastity. The narrative in which Thaise occurs, 'The Tale of Apollonius of Tyre', is so important to Gower's programme for inculcating chastity that it covers nearly half of Book 8. While for 'The Tale of Three Questions', no single source has been identified, for 'The Tale of Apollonius of Tyre', Gower is working with an ancient and widespread literary tradition that he appropriates, among other reasons, for a fresh exemplar of Middle English Marian rhetoric.<sup>169</sup> This tale preaches the evils of incest,

165 CA 1, ll. 3300, 3304.

166 Banchich, 'Holy Fear and Poetics', p. 188.

167 CA 1, l. 3328.

168 CA 1, l. 3334. Concerning Alphonse's judgement and relationships between his court and the law, see Conrad van Dijk, *John Gower and the Limits of the Law* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 39–40.

169 For a helpful summary of scholarship on potential sources for 'The Tale of Three Questions' and for the intriguing suggestion that the tale may derive from an as-yet undiscovered manuscript of Pedro Alfonso's *Disciplina Clericalis*, see R. F. Yeager, 'Spanish Literary Influence in England: John Gower and Pedro Alfonso', in *John Gower in England and Iberia*, ed. by Ana Sáez-Hidalgo and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp. 119–30. Yeager holds out the possibility that an uncanonical manuscript of the *Disciplina* includes the tale. On the history of 'Apollonius of Tyre' and Gower's place in it, see Elizabeth Archibald,

the only sexual sin that receives attention when the priest confesses Amans of lechery.<sup>170</sup> As is clear from our investigation into the *Mirour de l'Omme*, Gower focuses so sharply on incest not only because it was the sin against which John the Baptist, his model narrator, last preached but also because it was the Devil's means of reproducing evil. Incest resembles the turn toward self-adulation and -gratification in original sin. Through 'Apollonius of Tyre' Genius teaches the lover the tyranny of incest as expressed in the sad narrative of Antiochus and his daughter, and the priest indicates how incest might be circumvented in the episodes showing Apollonius's hard won but healthy relationships with his wife and daughter. As a daughter who is separated from her father for many years by misfortune, Thaise unsuspectingly confronts a vicious side of Apollonius and takes an active role in preventing a violation such as Antiochus's daughter suffers. However, even before Thaise becomes acquainted with her father, her young adult life has been dedicated to preserving chastity. A Marian antidote to lustfulness, she is exemplary for both avoiding incest and verbally defending virginity.

While Peronelle demonstrates the rhetorical proficiencies of a young woman who has been taught Marian values, Thaise reveals what that teaching might look like. Given Thaise's birth and upbringing, it is even more astonishing that she could make so much of the instruction she received. She was born at sea during a storm, torn from a mother thought to be dead, left to be raised by ostensible friends of her father in Tarsus, and gradually alienated from an increasingly jealous foster mother. Nevertheless, she overcomes these and other difficulties to make great academic progress that recalls that of the Virgin during her temple studies. The education of the young though wise Thaise is described below:

Sche was wel kept, sche was wel loked,  
 Sche was wel tawht, sche was wel boked,  
 So wel sche spedde hir in hire youthe  
 That sche of every wisdom couthe,  
 That for to seche in every lond

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*Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991).

170 For an extended explanation of why the sin of incest received so much attention in the *Confessio Amantis*, see Donavin, *Incest Narratives*; Scanlon, 'The Riddle of Incest', pp. 93–127; Georgiana Donavin, 'Taboo and Transgression in Gower's "Apollonius of Tyre"', in *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, ed. by Eve Salisbury, Georgiana Donavin, and Merrill Llewellyn Price (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2002), pp. 94–121; Sebastian I. Sobecki, 'Educating Richard: Incest, Marriage, and (Political) Consent in Gower's "Tale of Apollonius"', *Anglia*, 125 (2007), 205–16.



So wys an other no man fond,  
Ne so wel tawht at mannes yhe.<sup>171</sup>

Later in the tale, we hear about the specific results of this instruction: her expert musicianship, mastery of the commonplaces of argumentation, and incomparable oratory. The lines above reveal that at least some of her skills derive from reading until she had mastered many subjects. Indeed, she is more astute than any other, a paragon who can accomplish what no man can attain.

What marks her wisdom and ability as particularly Marian is her unshakeable devotion to God's salvific powers and to chastity. When her foster mother, envious of the attention Thaise draws away from her foster sister Philotene, orders a servant to murder her ward, Thaise staves off death with a demonstration of faith: she kneels immediately and 'Toward the hevene for to crave, / Hire wofull soule if sche mai save'.<sup>172</sup> Miraculously, a ship passes by and rescues her from the clutches of the assassin Theophilus, ironically named 'God-loving' and alluding to the character famous in medieval legends for being freed by the Virgin Mary from the Devil. Indeed, Thaise saves Theophilus from the act of murder through her own faith in salvation. Her safety, however, is precarious and lasts only long enough for the sailors to sell her to a brothel in Mytilene. While Thaise had shown Marian devotion and wisdom before her capture, it is in the brothel where she establishes her priority as preserving her virginity. Although ten or twelve men attempt to treat her as a prostitute, 'such a grace God hire sente, / That for the sorwe which sche made / Was non of hem which pouer hade / To don hire eny vileinie'.<sup>173</sup> Just as with Peronelle, Gower connects Thaise to an image of the Virgin at the Annunciation through an emphasis on her 'grace'. To maintain her virginity, Thaise loads her verbal self-defence with such sorrow that desiring clients fall back under the weight. According to Matthew W. Irvin, 'Thaise's role in the "Tale of Apollonius" is dependent upon the reforming role of her chastity, of which pity is an affective dimension'.<sup>174</sup> She even convinces her pimp's servant, sent in to deflower her, that instead of entertaining men, she should be allowed to set up a school for upright girls and send the proceeds to his master. As a means of persuasion, she deploys the *rime riche* used to such good effect by Peronelle and argues that her school will save the pimp's gold from falling 'be this weie; / Bot soffre me to go mi weie [...]'.<sup>175</sup>

171 CA 8, ll. 1327–33.

172 CA 8, ll. 1387–88.

173 CA 8, ll. 1328–31.

174 Matthew W. Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower: Politics and Personae in the Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), p. 267.

175 CA 8, ll. 1451–52.

Leonin's earnings, she presses, will not fall away if only she is allowed to go her own chaste way; as Zarins points out, Gower imbues the speech of these heroines with *rime riche* in order to counteract the oppression of dissolute men.<sup>176</sup> Impressed, the servant

hire wofull pleintes herde  
And he therof hath take kepe,  
Him liste betre for to wepe  
Than don oght elles to the game.  
And thus sche kepte himself fro schame.<sup>177</sup>

The servant is moved to weep by her sorrowful words; he is convinced by her delivery (once again she is on her knees), by the reason in her proposal, and perhaps by a little greed: Thaise's earnings as a schoolmistress will surely bring in more profit than would likely come from her work as a reforming 'prostitute'.

In the establishment of Thaise's school, we begin to see the extent of this Marian mistress's learning; she fulfils her promise to 'teche of thinges newe / Which as non other womman can'.<sup>178</sup> Bullón-Fernández points out that Thaise's teaching extends eventually to Apollonius, who 'learns to become a good father and a good king [...]'.<sup>179</sup> In the school her scholars find that she has 'the wisdom of a clerk', a talent for the 'citole and to the harpe', and a facility with debate.<sup>180</sup> In addition, for 'whom it liketh for to carpe' — the girls who enjoy formal argumentation — she teaches 'Proverbes and demandes slyhe / An other such thei nevere syhe, / Which that science so wel tawhte [...]'.<sup>181</sup> Proverbs and riddles are also the wily and self-centred Alphonse's specialty, but here, instead of powerful men engaging in verbal conquest, maidens learn how to defend themselves, keep their virginity, and grow in the reasoning capacities with which they were created. If in the beginning of 'The Tale of Apollonius of Tyre' the eponymous hero protects his life by resolving a riddle concerning incest, in the rest of the narrative the skilful and salvific words that protect from incest and point toward Marian virtue issue from this maid.

Thaise will need all her scholastic abilities and methods of self-defence when unwittingly reunited with a father she has never seen, having been

176 Zarins, 'Rich Words', p. 247.

177 CA 8, ll. 1432–46.

178 CA 8, ll. 1464–65.

179 Bullón-Fernández, *Fathers and Daughters*, p. 64.

180 CA 8, ll. 1483, 1487–88.

181 CA 8, ll. 1488–91.

fostered as an infant.<sup>182</sup> Apollonius, grieving for a wife and daughter he believes to be dead, arrives in Mytilene's port. Having become renowned for the education she imparts there, Thaise is called to assist in reviving this 'woful king';<sup>183</sup> he is holed up in the dark depths of his ship and unresponsive to friendly appeals. Thaise descends into the hold with her harp 'And lich an angel sang withal';<sup>184</sup> when he took no notice,

Sche falleth with him into wordes,  
And telleth him of sondri bordes,  
And axeth him demandes strange,  
Wherof sche made his herte change,  
And to hire speche his ere he leide  
And hath merveile of that sche seide.<sup>185</sup>

While marvelling at her gnomic words followed by proverbs and ethical problems, Apollonius is still not able to muster a civil response. Her verbal mastery in comparison to his guttural explosions is especially striking, since from the beginning of the tale, Apollonius proves himself to be an expert speaker by solving the riddle at Antioch. Now, as he is laid low in Mytilene, his angry sobs rising, Thaise reaches out to touch him, and he reacts with an uncivilized slap.

It is Thaise's warning after Apollonius strikes out at her, even though she has spent considerable effort to comfort him, that defines her as a *virgo bona dicendi perita*. Like Peronelle, she establishes an ethos of spotless integrity, her boldness derived from her blamelessness. She says to him with the fearlessness of Fear in the *Mirour de l'Homme*,

'Avoi, mi lord, I am a maide;  
And if ye wiste what I am,  
And out of what lignage I cam,  
Ye wolde noght be so salvage'.  
With that he sobreth his corage  
And put away his hevvy chiere.<sup>186</sup>

Thaise presents her speech as a staircase of clauses ('I am/ I am/ I cam'), the short second line allowing for that construction. As she repeats words resounding with *m* and *a*, she underscores her youth and virginity in the

182 William Robins demonstrates how this scene provides a foretaste of the conclusion to the *Confessio*. See William Robins, 'Romance, Exemplum, and the Subject of the *Confessio Amantis*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 19 (1997), 168–74.

183 CA 8, l. 1655.

184 CA 8, l. 1671.

185 CA 8, ll. 1675–80.

186 CA 8, ll. 1694–1701.

assonance and consonance: 'I am a maide'. At the bottom of the staircase is the 'salvage' who can be redeemed only by recognizing the 'lignage' in Thaise that he no longer projects. The onomatopoeic shift from *ma/am* to the sibilant recrimination of him who is 'so salvage' — a cacemphaton to arrest a violent act — highlights Apollonius's need to rise up. He can do so only by heeding the warning of the self-identifying virgin; her dovetailing claims to a noble heritage and a chaste life and her demand that they be respected point the way up the stairs. Thaise's speech illustrates the Marian rhetoric outlined in the *Mirour*, not painted over, but made more virtuous — both in the sense of its righteousness and its power — through simple, appropriate ornaments. Its holy indignation immediately moves Apollonius to sober thought and to civil behaviour — in other words, to Reason — that is above violence and the potential for an unwitting incestuous attack.

Reunited in a healthy and loving relationship, Apollonius and his daughter are entertained by the king of Mytilene, Athenagoras, who falls deeply in love with Thaise during these festivities. Thus '[s]che weddeth him as for hire lord / Thus be thei alle of on acord'.<sup>187</sup> As with the Virtues' espousal to Reason and Peronelle's to the newly reasonable Alphonse, Thaise's marriage to Athenagoras represents mental stability after emotional volatility; familial, intellectual, and spiritual accord after misfortune and uncertainty. This personal and social harmony was enabled by Marian rhetoric. Like the appeals of Virtue's daughters or of Peronelle, Thaise's words are ingrained with sorrow, fear of God, and other holy emotions that are a tonic for their auditors' confused consciousness and a guide to the better life that her marriage guarantees. While she invests learned words with sacred emotions, moves her hearers' will toward the right path, and expertly delivers her uplifting message, Thaise is another version of Mary the bride in John of Garland's *Epithalamium*, the Virgin whose life story both teaches and exemplifies the liberal arts.

Together, Peronelle's answer to Alfonso's riddle on her father's behalf and Thaise's warning against her father's brutality take Gower beyond a reaction to patriarchal challenge or a presentation of good courtly advice. These *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* have a spiritual dimension as they embody and insist upon Marian virtue. The words of Peronelle in the *Confessio's* first book and those of Thaise in the last enclose Genius's long lesson in a Marian body, function as a feminized prologue and epilogue, and offer a concluding moral on the infractions of pride and lust, sins particularly recognized as having been reversed by Mary. As Irvin remarks, although sin is degrading and miserable in Gower's poems, chastity is a 'joy', and improved by tales such as 'The Three Questions' and 'Apollonius

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<sup>187</sup> CA 8, ll. 1775–76.

of Tyre', 'readers, by their very pleasure, participate in the act of chastity'.<sup>188</sup> I have argued that this pleasure is made possible in the *Confessio Amantis* by two *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* who put moral order to their worlds when the patriarchal establishments and discourses expected to support them have collapsed.

### Marina, Shakespeare's *Virgo bona dicendi perita*

We have already seen that in *Paradise Lost* Milton offers an important reception of the *Mirour de l'Omme* as he recasts Gower's representation of Sin and Death. While Milton revises Gower's allegory of incestuous evil, Shakespeare stages the *Mirour's* feminine Virtues as embodied in the Marian rhetoricians Peronelle and Thaise. Many of Shakespeare's spritely female characters who astonish their audiences with virtue, wit, and persuasive speech could be connected to Peronelle or other strong women in Gower, and here we will concentrate on Shakespeare's revival of Gower's Thaise in *Pericles*' Marina. The final chapter of this book revisits *Pericles* to analyse the choral speeches of Gower, the authorial presenter. As Gary Waller has observed concerning Shakespeare's *virgo*, in recreating 'The Tale of Apollonius of Tyre' for the stage, the playwright invests Marina with Marian overtones evident in Gower and makes her the *Stella Maris* to her father's misadventures at sea.<sup>189</sup> In Shakespeare's Apollonius turned Pericles, the hero experiences his 'salvation through the redemptive return of a woman to rescue and intercede for his erring behaviour'.<sup>190</sup> This woman is Pericles' daughter, Marina, *virgo bona dicendi perita*.

William Shakespeare most likely read Gower's *Confessio Amantis* in one of Thomas Berthelette's editions (1532 or 1554) and throughout a long career acknowledged Gower's poetry.<sup>191</sup> The early *Comedy of Errors* relies

188 Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, p. 271.

189 Gary Waller, *The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 166–70.

190 Waller, *The Virgin Mary*, p. 166. Waller describes this event as 'the recurring male fantasy of salvation' (p. 166). Although he does not mention Marina specifically, Scott F. Crider describes the 'rhetorical care of one another, one soul to be guided toward the real [...]' that permeates dialogues in Shakespeare's plays and could be assigned to the Marian rhetor of *Pericles*. See Scott F. Crider, *With What Persuasion: An Essay on Shakespeare and the Ethics of Rhetoric* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 78. In addition, Crider points out that an 'ideal woman skilled in speaking' aptly labels Paulina of *The Winter's Tale* (p. 152), whose 'proximate end is to lead Leontes to an act of faith' (p. 158) and to 'reverse the reversal' that imposes tragic misfortune on a happy family (p. 160).

191 R. F. Yeager, 'Shakespeare as Medievalist: What it Means for Performing *Pericles*', in *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Performance and Adaptation of the Plays with Medieval Sources or Settings*, ed. by Martha W. Driver and Sid Ray (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), pp. 216–17.

on 'Apollonius of Tyre' for narrative frame and scene, and as Shakespeare embarked upon his late theatrical romances, he collaborated with George Wilkins to retell Apollonius's tale in *Pericles*.<sup>192</sup> Wilkins, whose presence is felt especially in the first two acts, was Shakespeare's acquaintance and author of the contemporaneous prose romance *The Painfull Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre*, which often seems to be a rendering of the play.<sup>193</sup> Together, Shakespeare and Wilkins wrote a drama that, although not consistently applauded throughout the ages, spoke to its time and speaks again to feminist viewers and critics. Heralded in the First Quarto of 1609 as a 'much admired Play' and deemed appropriate entertainment for distinguished guests of state, by 1635 *Pericles* had already undergone five re-printings.<sup>194</sup> The First Quarto presents a corrupt unauthorized text, however, and the play was not included in authoritative anthologies of Shakespeare's works until the supplement to the Third Folio (1663–64), an editorial history that cast doubt upon the play's authenticity, presented problems with interpretation, and discouraged scholars from deep study.<sup>195</sup> From the age of Dryden to the later twentieth century, it is fair to say that readers and viewers of the sporadically performed play appreciated *Pericles* less than did Shakespeare's contemporaries (Ben Jonson aside, as we shall see in this book's last chapter), and some declared it an inferior collaboration with an uneven quality of writing.<sup>196</sup> Nevertheless, late

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192 While most current scholarship acknowledges Wilkins as Shakespeare's collaborator for *Pericles*, for the sake of brevity I will often refer to Shakespeare as the author. Suzanne Gossett makes a compelling case that Shakespeare's collaborator was indeed George Wilkins. Gossett argues that when Shakespeare's play was posted in the Stationer's Register in 1608, Wilkins was at the height of his brief fame and through acquaintance with the playwright could have induced him during closure of the theatres in 1607 to collaborate on a project. In light of the historical moment, mutual connections, and Shakespeare's other practices of collaboration both as a young author learning from more established writers and as an established writer encouraging those who were younger, Gossett declares, 'It is thus unsurprising that he would undertake a joint project with another apparently promising younger writer'. See Suzanne Gossett, Introduction in *Pericles*, ed. by Suzanne Gossett, Arden Shakespeare, 3<sup>rd</sup> series (London: Thomson Learning, 2004), p. 59. Stylistic analysis by MacDonald P. Jackson and others finds evidence of Wilkins' contribution, especially in the first two acts. See MacDonald P. Jackson, 'George Wilkins and the First Two Acts of *Pericles*: New Evidence from Function Words', *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 6 (1991), 155–63.

193 G. Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1966), 8, pp. 492–548.

194 F. David Hoeniger, 'Gower and Shakespeare in *Pericles*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33.4 (Winter 1982), 461.

195 For a summary of the transmission and the state of the text in the third folio, see Gossett, Introduction, pp. 23–28.

196 Between the 1640s and 1950, *Pericles* was not often produced, and when it was, the 'Gowerian element' (Gower the presenter, lines about incest, scenes in brothels) were omitted. See Yeager, 'Shakespeare as Medievalist', p. 223. For negative views of the text of *Pericles* by modern scholars, see, for instance, Stephen J. Lynch, 'The Authority of Gower in

twentieth-century productions began to catalyse new scholarly interest; as F. David Hoeniger has observed, the high approval of *Pericles* by modern audiences does not corroborate disapproving scholarly assessments of the play.<sup>197</sup> More open to the play's appeal, twenty-first-century feminists have offered fascinating new interpretations based on Marina's speeches.<sup>198</sup>

Shakespeare and Wilkins emphasize Marina's Marian-speaking role, especially her identity as *Stella Maris*, by changing her name, amplifying her speeches, demonstrating her defence of chastity against even the Governor of Mytilene, and elaborating on her misfortunes in a series of *repetitiones*. Paradoxically, but in keeping with Gower's *virgines bonae dicendi peritae*, *repetitio* is also the figure of speech that reverses Marina's fortunes and allows her family to understand the workings of providence and her Marian role within it. In *Pericles* 'Thaisa' (a version of 'Thaise' in the *Confessio Amantis*) is the name given to the eponymous hero's wife and Marina's mother, whom Gower never assigns a name beyond the 'kinges doghter'.<sup>199</sup> When Marina first enters the stage, she is a young woman who has been fostered since birth by the reigning family of Tarsus. Lamenting the death of her nurse, she identifies with the great gales at sea, having taken her first breath amidst one: 'Ay me! Poor maid, / Born in a tempest when my mother died, / This world to me is like a lasting storm [...].'<sup>200</sup> In a new tempest of grief over Lychordia, Marina does not yet see that her conscience is a port protecting her in life's storms, only that her very existence and her name derive from the sea, that her multiple troubles surround her like a squall.<sup>201</sup> Recursively telling the birth story by which she received her name to her would-be assassin and finally to her unwitting father, Marina, like the authors of *Pericles*, recycles a story told to her by others for present effect. Her seafaring woes magnify when pirates take her aboard, sail to Mytilene, and sell her to a brothel. Looking very like the beautiful mother she believes to be dead and suffering life's tempests like both her parents, Marina is herself a reiteration and speaks with the force

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Shakespeare's *Pericles*, *Mediaevalia*, 16 (1993), 361–78; Derek Pearsall, 'Teaching Gower's Reception: A Poet for All Ages', in *Approaches to Teaching the Poetry of John Gower* (New York: MLA, 2011), p. 33.

197 Hoeniger, 'Gower and Shakespeare in *Pericles*', pp. 461–62.

198 Gossett, Introduction, p. 163. This chapter will engage with a number of feminist critics on *Pericles* as the discussion proceeds.

199 CA 8, l. 785.

200 *Pericles*, 4.1, ll. 18–20.

201 Suparna Roychoudhury, 'Mental Tempests, Seas of Trouble: The Perturbations of Shakespeare's *Pericles*', *English Literary History*, 82 (2015), 1031. Although Shakespeare may have been the first to use 'Marina' as a personal name in English literature, the masculine form 'Marinus' had long been used and can be traced to Christian figures of the Roman Empire, for instance, Marinus of Caesarea (soldier and martyr, d. 262) and St Marinus (founder of San Marino, d. 366).

of Gower's repetitive plain style infused with Marian rhetoric.<sup>202</sup> As Simon Palfrey contends, 'because she bears and *recognizes* — in the fullest sense of the word — the repetitions she endures [...] [and] resists them', Marina embodies the many replications in the play and focuses herself on restating the circumstances of her birth and resisting the recurring harms to which she and other women have been exposed.<sup>203</sup> The young woman's recurring verbal prowess derives from her Marian model Thaise in the *Confessio Amantis*. Marina's restatements indelibly connect her to oceanic travail and the climactic reunion with her father aboard ship, finally calming all troubled waters through familial reintegration.<sup>204</sup> Marina provides a *Stella Maris* for Pericles' troubled spirit, tossed about by shipwreck and personal loss, and a Marian example, having defied even the brothel to which she is sold.

Several Shakespearean scholars have worked to square the Marianism of *Pericles* with its reformation environment and the many allusions to the classical pantheon in the play. Richard Finkelstein points out that the play incorporates Marian resonances without explicitly defending Catholic doctrines.<sup>205</sup> One way in which *Pericles* both gestures toward the Virgin and avoids an encounter with Catholicism is in its engagement with the goddess Diana. Gower's 'Apollonius of Tyre' notes Diana's temple at Ephesus and shows Thaise's mother taking residence there after being revived by the good doctor Cerimon, but Shakespeare expands the Roman goddess's role. According to Caroline Bicks, this complex representation of Diana, protector of virginity, female power, and fertility, allows for the feminine divine to overshadow the play in a context outside of contemporary disagreements over Mary's position in Christianity.<sup>206</sup> In *Pericles*, Marina's mother, Thaisa, becomes Diana's votaress after being rescued in Ephesus, and Marina herself prays to the goddess for the preservation of chastity. In addition, Pericles receives a vision from Diana in the final act of the play that directs his course to a reunion with his wife. Whereas Gower writes that the vision comes from the 'hihe God', Shakespeare elaborates upon Gower's Marianism to give the feminine divine control over the events of the play.<sup>207</sup> Pericles is advised to proceed to Diana's temple in Ephesus and

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202 Pericles exclaims over the likeness between Marina and Thaisa at 5.1, l. 120, and Marina herself identifies her life with a storm at 4.1, ll. 18–21.

203 Simon Palfrey, 'The Rape of Marina', *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*, 7 (2007), 149–50.

204 Roychoudhury, 'Mental Tempests', pp. 1034–35.

205 Richard Finkelstein, 'Pericles, Paul, and Protestantism', *Comparative Drama*, 44.2 (2010), 101–29.

206 Caroline Bicks, 'Backsliding at Ephesus: Shakespeare's Diana and the Churching of Women' in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. by David Skeeel (New York: Garland, 2000), p. 207.

207 CA 8, l. 1789.



give a 'repetition to the life' of how he lost Thaisa at sea.<sup>208</sup> Diana, who promises him happiness if he performs this repetition, is the virgin with a 'silver bow'.<sup>209</sup> So that the audience will not miss Marian associations among these classical allusions, Shakespeare and his collaborator deploy liturgical language associated with the Virgin. For instance, of his daughter who has restored him to sanity and lifted his soul from ruin, Pericles exclaims, 'Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget', an allusion to the Virgin's giving birth to her creator and an expression that Howard Felperin reads as an acknowledgment of salvation from the intervention of the wisest of women.<sup>210</sup> Additionally, the Epilogue claims that both Marina and her mother, because of their spotless virtue, have been 'led on by heaven and crowned with joy at last'.<sup>211</sup> The final harbour of the play, then, is the *porta caeli*, where despite church reforms, Mary could still be viewed in prayer books, paintings, and more as Queen of Heaven.

Marina, a *Stella Maris*, is the powerful *virgo bona dicendi perita* of *Pericles*. Even her circumstances are constituted by the rhetorical exercise of the Senecan *controversia*, an exercise that Shakespeare and his collaborator might have studied in Piot's *The Oratour*, a late sixteenth-century translation of a French *trivium* text by Alexander van den Busche (aka Silvayn).<sup>212</sup> Among the prompts for debate in this text is the *Sacerdos Prostituta*, an exercise connecting to questions of chastity and proof. A prefiguration of Marina's character, the *Sacerdos Prostituta*, or Prostitute Priestess, has been captured by pirates and later sold to a pimp; once in the brothel, she fends off rape first by argumentation and then, in desperation, by homicide. Of course, homicide does not come into Marina's story in order to maintain her representation as a marriageable young woman, but as Lorraine Helms points out, her rhetoric is 'pugnacious', described by the Bawd as 'virginal fencing'.<sup>213</sup> The *controversiae*, such as that of the Prostitute Priestess, were prompts for debate about real or fictional laws that taught rhetoric students to see the merits of those laws from multiple perspectives. The debatable statute relevant to Marina states that a 'priestess must

208 *Pericles* 5.1, l. 282.

209 *Pericles* 5.1, l. 284. F. Elizabeth Hart, "'Great is Diana" of Shakespeare's Ephesus', *Studies in English Literature*, 43 (2003), 365. Hart points out that both Thaisa and Marina in *Pericles* appropriate Diana's various powers concerning virginity and motherhood so that the play lays down the 'law of the mother'.

210 *Pericles* 5.1, ll. 194–5. Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 168.

211 *Pericles*, Epilogue, l. 6.

212 Alexander Sylvayn, *The Oratour: Handling a hundred severall Discourses in forme of Declamations[...]* Written in French by Alexander Silvayn, and Englished by L. P. (London: Islip, 1596; rpt. Ann Arbor, MI: Early English Books, 2007–10), <<http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A17337.0001.001>>.

213 Lorraine Helms, 'The Saint in the Brothel: Or, Eloquence Rewarded', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 41.3 (Autumn 1990), 328. *Pericles*, Act 4.2, l. 56.

be chaste and of chaste [parents], pure and of pure [parents].<sup>214</sup> Here, the main question to be disputed revolves around the woman's potential pollution, with student advocates arguing that she retains purity of mind, so should gain the priesthood, and detractors claiming that she has been polluted by the situations in which she has been involved.<sup>215</sup> In *Pericles* Marina certainly has her defenders and detractors, many of whom she gathers to her cause with her compelling rhetoric by which she maintains her virginity.

Defending her pure life against an assassin, pirates, brothel-keepers, johns, and finally a potentially violent father, Marina's tongue must be her sword. Against her would-be assassin, she offers the blunt edge, flattering him with her observations that he is 'well-favoured' with 'a gentle heart' in order to delay his assault.<sup>216</sup> Against Lysimachus, Governor of Mytilene and would-be customer in the bawdy house, a john whom Gower's Thaise is not challenged to convert, Marina feints and refuses to grant him a single major premise that would lead their conversation toward his lustful purposes.<sup>217</sup> For instance, when Lysimachus attempts to corner her by announcing that 'the house [she] dwell[s] in proclaims [her] to be a creature of sale', she counters with 'Do you know this house to be a place of such resort and will come into't?'<sup>218</sup> Just as in her encounter with the assassin Leonine, her insistence on the good inherent in those who would do her harm unravels the logic of their evil purposes.<sup>219</sup> This is the same principle by which Gower unravels the Devil's rhetoric with Marian Virtues in the *Mirour de l'Omme*. As one of the anonymous johns exclaims about Marina, she manages to preach 'divinity' even in a brothel, where she converts the lascivious and exemplifies righteousness.<sup>220</sup> Considering the magnitude of

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214 Helms, 'The Saint in the Brothel', p. 321. Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae*, 1.2, Loeb edition, trans. by Michael Winterbottom (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); Bullough, 'Narrative and Dramatic Sources', pp. 546–48. Eugene Waith, 'Controversia in the English Drama: Medwell and Massinger', *Publication of the Modern Language Association*, 68 (1953), 286–303; Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

215 Helms, 'The Saint in the Brothel', pp. 322–23.

216 *Pericles*, 4.1, ll. 93–94.

217 Gower's source, Godfrey of Viterbo, places the governor of Mytilene in the brothel as one of Tharsia's customers, but Gower does not bring in Lysimachus's counterpart (Athenagoras) until nearly the conclusion of the narrative. For a comparison between Godfrey's *Pantheon* and Gower's 'Tale of Apollonius of Tyre', see Thari Zweers, 'Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon* and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: The Story of Apollonius Retold', *Accessus*, 5.1 (2019), <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/accessus/vol5/iss1/3/>>. Apparently, Shakespeare and Wilkins saw dramatic potential in Godfrey's version of the brothel scene and included it.

218 *Pericles*, 4.6, ll. 77–80.

219 Nona Fienberg, 'Marina in *Pericles*: Exchange Values and the Art of Moral Discourse', *Iowa State Journal of Research*, 57.2 (November 1982), 154.

220 *Pericles*, 4.5, l. 4.

the dangers threatening Marina, her presence of mind and verbal acuity are astonishing. Shakespeare and his collaborator even magnify Marina's perils by adding lurid details to their sources: by implying that the pirates capture her for a gang rape, rather than for an escape from her murderer, and equating her fate with the historical daughter of Sejanus, who was brutally violated by the hangman before her death.<sup>221</sup> In the face of extreme difficulty, Marina offers what Nona Fienberg labels a 'moral discourse' that allows her to escape not only physical assault, but also commodification in the market economy represented by the brothel in Mitilene.<sup>222</sup> When Marina reaches the apex of her story, the reunion with her father, she downplays her evil experiences and magnifies any potential good, just as she insisted on the virtue within her would-be attackers. In the recognition scene with Pericles, she avoids mention of her time in the brothel and even casts the pirates as saviours, as they actually are in Gower's version of the tale, but not (as we have seen) in this play. All in all, Marina's tongue slices through malicious intentions and social customs as it severs evil from good.

By the recognition scene, as many critics have noticed, Marina has established herself as a capable rhetorician. For Jeanie Grant Moore, Marina proves herself 'the educated aristocratic lady of Renaissance humanism.'<sup>223</sup> It is Marina, according to Deanne Williams, who during the progress of the play transitions from old rhetorical models underpinned by authority as articulated by Gower to a humanist rhetoric of persuasive argumentation. Marina's speech, unlike the silence of Antiochus's daughter in both 'Apollonius of Tyre' and *Pericles*, prohibits incest and rape, compels polite utterance from others, and enables the family reunion.<sup>224</sup> Moreover, Marina excels not only in a sapient Marian ethos and in convincing argumentation, but also in delivery. Pericles describes her as the 'silver-voiced [...] [one w]ho starves the ear she feeds and makes them hungry, / The more she gives them speech.'<sup>225</sup> Even when Marina chides, she makes her audience want to hear more.

It is during the reunion scene with Pericles that her rhetorical skills come to fruition, not in small part because they repeat many of Thaise's words from 'The Tale of Apollonius of Tyre' and deploy the *repetitio* associ-

221 On the pirates and the allusion to gang rape, see Palfrey, 'The Rape of Marina', pp. 140–54. For an explanation of the Sejanus allusion, see Angus Easson, 'Marina's Maidenhead', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 24.3 (Summer 1973), 328–29.

222 Fienberg, 'Marina in *Pericles*', pp. 153–61.

223 Jeanie Grant Moore, 'Riddled Romance: Kingship and Kinship in *Pericles*', *Rocky Mountain Review*, 57.1 (Spring 2003), 41.

224 Deanne Williams, 'Papa Don't Preach: The Power of Proximity in *Pericles*', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 71.2 (Spring: 2002), 597.

225 *Pericles* 5.1, ll. 125, 127–28.

ated with Mary at the Annunciation.<sup>226</sup> Marina is called in by Lysimachus to heal the ‘distemperature’ of King Pericles, her unbeknownst father, who has come to this shore a shipwreck of a grieving man.<sup>227</sup> Unresponsive because he believes both his wife and daughter to be dead, Pericles will finally be drawn out of his stupor by Marina’s simple, repetitive language and his own echoes of what she says. At first, Marina and a companion try to soothe Pericles with singing, but he turns away and offers a struggle.<sup>228</sup> As Byron Nelson describes it, this is the ‘moral low point’ in the play when Pericles, believing Marina to be a courtesan because she begins her therapy with music, strikes her.<sup>229</sup> In previous scenes, by recounting her birth story and honourable education, Marina has fended off rape, and here again against her unwitting father, she must defend herself. She does so in the simplest of Thaise’s lines, easily remembered for its assonance and alliteration in which she claims her Marian identity — ‘I am a maid’ — and by reciting the details of her life until Pericles recognizes her as a most respectable fellow-sufferer and finally as his daughter.<sup>230</sup>

Reminding the audience that *Pericles* involves a series of narrative rehearsals, the eponymous hero entreats Marina: ‘Tell thy story’.<sup>231</sup> She does so modestly, offering biographical titbit after titbit, until by repeating what she has conveyed to him, he can master the truth that she is a worthy friend — and his own child. Inga-Stina Ewbank points out the simple, literal diction and the short assertions that comprise Marina’s utterances in the recognition scene, expressions such as ‘[...] I am but a stranger’ and finally ‘My name is Marina’, expressions that conform to Birky’s theory concerning brevity’s place in Marian rhetoric and reprise Thaise’s lines from the *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>232</sup> Through the reiterative claims of anadiplosis, Pericles hears and assimilates Marina’s revelations:

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226 For a discussion of this scene that emphasizes the staging of invention and affect, see Nowlin, *Affect of Invention*, p. 207.

227 *Pericles*, 5.1, l. 31.

228 *Pericles*, 5.1. Stage direction at l. 90.

229 Byron Nelson, ‘Marina, Isabella, and Shakespeare’s Sex Workers’, *Selected Papers of the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference*, 2 (2008): <<http://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/spovsc/vol2/iss2008/3>>. Nelson’s general view is that Shakespeare is sympathetic toward sex workers, whose presence in Southwark and in the theatres would have been familiar. Although the stage direction is not stipulated in the First Quarto, the violence occurs in Wilkins’ *The Painfull Adventures of Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, and it is implied in *Pericles* when the hero mentions having ‘pushed [Marina] back’ (5.1, l. 144).

230 *Pericles*, 5.1, l. 97. Marina’s line is a reiteration of Thaise’s in CA 8, l. 1694.

231 *Pericles*, 5.1, l. 155.

232 Inga-Stina Ewbank, ‘“My name is Marina”: The Language of Recognition’, in *Shakespeare’s Styles: Essays in Honour of Kenneth Muir*, ed. by Inga-Stina Ewbank and G. K. Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 111–30. ‘My name is Marina’ echoes ‘My name is Thaise’ in CA 8, l. 1717; ‘I am but a stranger’ reflects ‘In Tharse I was forthdrawe [...]’ in CA 8, l. 1719.

Pericles: And wherefore called Marina?

Marina: Called Marina for I was born at sea.

Pericles: At sea! What mother?

Marina: My mother was the daughter of a king.<sup>233</sup>

A series of anadiploses, with father and daughter echoing the final word of the other's speech, has yielded a *gradatio*, mounting to the discovery of their family relationship and literally raising Marina from her knees, a posture recalling Gower's Thaise: 'Now blessing on thee!' Pericles exclaims, 'Rise: thou art my child [...]'<sup>234</sup> We recall that the style of this passage imitates the stair steps that Thaise's elocution provides for her father's ascent in 'Apollonius of Tyre'. Having taken Marina's medicine in digestible doses, Pericles in the end experiences a kind of wonder at the recognition of his daughter, a wonder similar to a Marian annunciation.<sup>235</sup> Whereas Gower emphasizes how Thaise restores Apollonius to reason, Shakespeare and Wilkins underscore the divinity in Marina's language through Pericles' resulting mystical experience. He hears the music of the spheres and expresses amazement at the miracle of meeting the daughter he thought dead in Tarsus. Having been healed and exalted by his *Stella Maris*, he exclaims that a 'great sea of joys' threatens to 'rush [...] upon [him and] [o]rbeare the shores of [his] mortality [...]'<sup>236</sup> Like Apollonius, he ascends from the dark hold of the ship that has become his own maritime hell and into the light cast forth for him by the Virgin. It is Marina's reiterative speech and Pericles' *repetitio* of her words that have united and restored them to bliss — and recalled the authors' debt to the most important ornament in Gower's plain style and to one of the gems of the medieval poet's Marian rhetoric.

After Pericles' climactic resurrection, Shakespeare seems to downplay Marina's marriage to Lysimachus, a marriage that Gower presents as the final means of establishing accord in 'Apollonius of Tyre'. Their betrothal receives only a brief mention, when Lysimachus asks Pericles for her hand and meets the future mother-in-law in Ephesus.<sup>237</sup> In the most extended interaction between Marina and the Governor of Mytilene in the brothel, we have already noted how Marina restores Lysimachus's honour by refusing to entertain him as a customer: she preserves the possibility of marriage by denying sex. Therefore, while the courtship and the wedding itself are deemphasized, the conditions for it are greatly elaborated through the

<sup>233</sup> *Pericles*, 5, sc.i, ll. 183–86.

<sup>234</sup> *Pericles*, 5.1, l. 248.

<sup>235</sup> Altman, *The Tudor (Play of) Mind*. Altman explains the Ciceronian rhetorical techniques that were used in Elizabethan drama to invoke a sense of wonder.

<sup>236</sup> *Pericles* 5.1, ll. 227–28.

<sup>237</sup> *Pericles* 5.1, 297–302, 5.3, ll. 90–92.

future young couple's debate. Lysimachus is saved and reunited with his rational self — in a sense, married to Virtue — long before the prospect of his alliance with Marina. Like Alphonse in 'The Tale of Three Questions', he is spiritually improved and drawn into affection by a woman whose humbleness ostensibly blocks but actually enables their intimacy. Once Marina becomes a respected teacher, Lysimachus's regard for her grows, but unlike Alphonse, he is not immediately satisfied concerning her lineage and eligibility. When asked, Lysimachus says, '[s]he never would tell / Her parentage: being demanded that / She would sit still and weep.'<sup>238</sup> Marina's sorrow, like Thaise's laments in the brothel, has inspired pity from the erstwhile pitiless and a deep, transformative identification with the suffering of others. Although Marina's marriage is less a metaphor for this transformation than the nuptials of Gower's Virtues, Peronelle, or Thaise, it nevertheless represents a triumph for Marian rhetoric.

## Conclusion

Shakespeare's remastering of 'Apollonius of Tyre' in *Pericles* indicates that the literary representation of the *virgo bona dicendi perita* could be as popular in early modern England as it was in the fourteenth century. In Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme* and *Confessio Amantis*, as well as in his imitators' play *Pericles*, *virgines bonae dicendi peritae* deliver a Marian rhetoric that resolves problems of basic evil and its incestuous manifestations on earth, even when expert male speakers such as Reason, Petro, and Apollonius are incapable. The *virgo bona dicendi perita*, divinely infused with Devotion, Fear, Knowledge, Virginity, and Continence, expresses wise words with holy emotions that move others toward the right path. This well-spoken virgin offers a brief, beautifully ornamented, and healing mode of speech that conforms to the salvific power of the Word.

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<sup>238</sup> *Pericles* 5.1, ll. 222–24.

## Epistles and Rhetorical Experimentation, Part I

### *Contexts and Practices*

Until now we have been exploring Gower's rhetorical theory and the orators whom he constructs from biblical models. Narrators who imitate John the Baptist and John the Evangelist or female personifications and fictional characters who represent the Virgin Mary imbue Gower's poetry with a biblical ethos, an impression of springing directly from and advancing the ends of scripture by preaching and prophesying. In the next three chapters we turn from Gower's invention of biblical speakers to his poetic arrangement: to the epistolary forms that Gower uses to address audiences directly and to the strategies for conclusions that, like the letters, advance petitions and enclose Gower's verses in a textual Mary garden. The turn to *dispositio* will not leave a discussion of poetic voices behind, but it will emphasize common structures that enable Gower's multivocality, expressed in branches of narrative speech that both differ from and complement the oratorical ideals achieved by the Saints John and the Virgin. Inside poems that present a biblical ethos, Gower deploys letters to convey the thoughts of secular women, position himself as an adviser to regents, and offer supplications to great men. In addition, he crafts Marian conclusions that make of his verses a *hortus conclusus*, outside of which the narrator stands as a pious petitioner. While the feminized missives provide a secular counterpart to Gower's *virgines bonae dicendi peritae*, the virginal *conclusiones* admit a pious devotee who is a subdued foil to the hortatory speakers modelled on the Saints John.

In this chapter we begin with epistolary forms that empower various narrative positions and with the literature in which Gower found these forms: Ovid's *Heroides*, various *specula principum*, and the ubiquitous dedicatory prologues. Close readings of Canace's deathbed missive to Machaire in the *Confessio Amantis*, the letter to Richard II in the *Vox Clamantis*, and the appeal to Archbishop Arundel in Oxford, All Souls, MS 98 show how Gower organized his poetry according to epistolary arrangements commonly taught in medieval grammar and composition courses. Gower adapted letters to individuate voices for fictional heroines, authoritative but obedient advisers to kings, and gracious authors gifting their books in liminal discourses. In Gower's verses these letters encapsulate both masculine and feminine voices directing the plain-spoken Word toward

clearly defined recipients in order to move them emotionally toward right belief and action.

Reading, interpreting, performing, translating, and composing missives were central to medieval education in the language arts. Studying letters taught grammar school children about ethos, audience, and arrangement and more advanced learners about professional discourses. According to Christopher Cannon, adaptations such as Gower made to classical letters were inspired by basic Latin training that encouraged 'an improvisatory attitude along with the rules of grammar' and taught certain forms as 'normative for poetry'.<sup>1</sup> Until now, no one has offered a sustained inquiry into Gower's deep fascination with letters as a compositional tool and the variety of poems for which he turned to epistolary rhetoric. As a schoolboy, John Gower would have studied, translated, and declaimed letters such as those in Ovid's *Heroides*, and during his legal training, he would have practised professional letter-writing instruction, or *dictamen*. Although the *ars dictaminis* was on the wane during Gower's prolific old age, he continued to adapt epistolary forms in his poetry; the Trentham Manuscript, including some of the last poems written by Gower, includes much experimentation with the letter as a genre. Before Chapter Five offers close readings of the Trentham letters, poems that reveal Gower's innovation with music as well as with missives, this chapter touches upon three ways in which Gower incorporated epistles into his compositions: through Ovidian love notes, messages containing advice to regents, and prologues presenting his work to benefactors.

## Ovid and Letters

In the *Heroides*, whether Ovid originates an epistolary genre as he claims or adapts pre-existing models as Patricia Rosenmeyer argues, a new practice for literary invention emerges, giving voice to women marginalized in earlier narratives by portraying them writing missives to their husbands or lovers.<sup>2</sup> In medieval grammar and rhetoric instruction such as John Gower

1 Christopher Cannon, *From Literacy to Literature: England, 1300–1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 85, 164.

2 Claiming that the poet created a new genre, Ovid's narrator asserts that *composita cantetur Epistola voce: / Ignotum hoc aliis ille novavit opus* (some letter with a practiced voice; / he first invented this form, unknown to others): Ovid, *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, trans. by J. H. Mozley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), pp. 3, 345–46. It should be noted, moreover, that not all the letters in the *Heroides* are fictionally penned by women. There is 'Paris to Helen' (XVI), 'Leander to Hero' (XVIII), and 'Acontius to Cydippe' (XX). On Ovid's invention of the epistolary genre, see Howard Jacobson, *Ovid's 'Heroides'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), pp. 13–14. For



would have experienced, the *Heroides* (or *Epistulae heroidum*, as this text was known in the Middle Ages) was read, inscribed, translated into the vernacular and back again, and performed.<sup>3</sup> These practices hark back to progymnasmata exercises in ethopoeia from the fourth century BCE in Athens and to appropriations of these exercises in Roman rhetorical education. As Manfred Kraus points out, by writing and delivering speeches in female voices, speeches very often saturated with pathos, schoolboys learned to express a gamut of emotions not generally approved in men, and to do so in the protected environment of the classroom, where they would not be accused of being effeminate.<sup>4</sup> In this way, young rhetoricians became expert in a whole spectrum of affective discourses that might move their audiences; in the medieval West, Ovid was the enabling author of feminine pathos. Gower announces his continuing interest in Ovid and letters in the *Confessio Amantis* 3 and 4. In Book 3 he refashions Epistle XI from the *Heroides* for 'The Tale of Canace and Machaire', the major focus of this discussion; in Book 4 Gower continues to transform Ovidian poems featuring letters, and he offers a lecture on basic language instruction and Ovid's place in it.<sup>5</sup> Among other Latin authors who convey classical knowledge, declares Genius, one ought to read Ovid, who 'wrot / And tawghte, if love be to hot, / In what manere it scholde akiele'.<sup>6</sup> Epitomizing medieval impressions of the *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*, Genius's summation of Ovid's moral import echoes twelfth- and thirteenth-century commentaries claiming that the classical poet's 'intention is to commend legitimate marriage or love' and to warn against 'the misfortunes that

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Rosenmeyer's argument that Ovid did not invent this genre, see Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions: The Letter in Greek Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), especially chapter 8.

- 3 The fact that students participated in learning about texts while inscribing them in manuscripts is perhaps less-discussed than other aspects of medieval language pedagogy. See Christine Elizabeth Eder, 'Die Schule des Klosters Tegernsee im frühen Mittelalter im Spiegel der Tegernseer Handschriften', *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktiner-Ordens und seiner Zweige*, 83 (1972), 6–155.
- 4 Manfred Kraus, 'Rehearsing the Other Sex: Impersonation of Women in Ancient Classroom Ethopoeia', in *Escuela y Literatura en Grecia Antigua*, ed. by José Antonio Fernández Delgado, Francisca Pordomingo, and Antonio Stramaglia (Cassino: University of Cassino, 2007), pp. 455–68.
- 5 Ovid, 'Canace Macareo', *Heroides* XI, <<http://www.the.latin.library.com/ovid/ovid.her11.shtml>>. Gower revises *Heroides* XI for CA 3, ll. 143–360. Ovidian narratives in CA 4 featuring letter writing include 'The Tale of Aeneas and Dido' (CA 4, ll. 77–146), 'The Tale of Demophon and Phyllis' (CA 4, ll. 731–886), 'Protesilaus' (CA 4, ll. 1901–34), and 'The Tale of Iphis and Araxarathen' (CA 4, ll. 3515–3684). All the tales just listed from Book 4 derive from the *Heroides*, with the exception of 'Iphis and Araxarathen' from the *Metamorphoses*. The 'primer' on language studies delivered by Genius is in CA 4, ll. 2633–2671.
- 6 CA 4, ll. 2669–71.

usually follow from foolish love [...]'.<sup>7</sup> Ovid, in Genius's assessment, keeps a school for both early readers and overwrought lovers.<sup>8</sup>

For early readers of the Middle Ages, once the basics of Latin grammar were mastered, letters and orations from classical literature provided opportunities to practise Latin syntax and rhetoric while 'acting out' in class or private tutoring situations. Delivering an epistle or monologue, students learned pronunciation and gesture, and they committed their presentation to memory. Showing performance pedagogy to be widespread, Martin Camargo's work traces this teaching mode's effect on authors like Chaucer, and similarly, Marjorie Curry Woods has demonstrated how instructions for reciting Dido's speeches from the *Aeneid* taught emotional affect in Latin constructions.<sup>9</sup> Along with Virgil's poems, Ovid's *Heroides*, containing in medieval collections seventeen letters by fictional women suffering for love, were a staple of grammar school education.<sup>10</sup> As Ralph J. Hexter points out, 'the *Epistulae heroidum* could be accommodated to a simple but satisfying didactic aim attributed to Ovid'.<sup>11</sup> After acknowledging a moralizing statement to this manageably sized collection of letters, master

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- 7 Suzanne C. Hagedorn (*Abandoned Women: Rewriting the Classics in Dante, Boccaccio, & Chaucer* [Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004], p. 29) quotes and translates this anonymous commentary, as do A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott, eds. in *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100–c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 20–21. The Latin phrasing concerning married love in the anonymous commentary is as follows: *intentio sua est legitimum commendare conubium vel amorem* and *infortuniis quae ex stulto et illicito solent prosequi*. As Ralph J. Hexter points out, though, (*Ovid and Medieval Schooling. Studies in Medieval School Commentaries on Ovid's Ars Amatoria, Epistulae ex Ponto, and Epistulae Heroidum* [München: Bei der Arbo-Gesellschaft, 1986], p. 211) the moral lessons attributed to Ovid in commentaries and the pedagogical means of developing them differed widely across classrooms in the Western Middle Ages.
- 8 See Warren Ginsberg, 'Ovidius ethicus?: Ovid and the Medieval Commentary Tradition' in *Desiring Discourse: the Literature of Love, Ovid through Chaucer*, ed. by James J. Paxson and Cynthia Gravlee (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press 1998), pp. 62–71. Ginsberg writes that 'Ovid is certainly a poet of surprises, but perhaps the most surprising thing about him is his transformation into an ethical pedagogue during the Middle Ages' (62).

- 9 Martin Camargo, 'Medieval Rhetoric Delivers; or, Where Chaucer Learned How to Act', *New Medieval Literatures*, 9 (2007), 41–62; 'Special Delivery: Were Medieval Letter Writers Trained in Performance?' in *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 173–89; Marjorie Curry Woods, 'Performing Dido' in *Public Declamations: Essays on Medieval Rhetoric, Education, and Letters in Honour of Martin Camargo*, ed. by Georgiana Donavin and Denise Stodola (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 253–66; Marjorie Curry Woods: *Weeping for Dido: The Classics in the Medieval Classroom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).
- 10 On the fact that although there were eighteen letters by women in the two sets of epistles that make up the *Epistulae Heroidum*, the letter by Sappho occurs in only one fifteenth-century manuscript. See Hexter, 'Ovid and Medieval Schooling', p. 141.
- 11 See Hexter, 'Ovid and Medieval Schooling', p. 143.

and students could easily move on from the hortatory framework to attend to the letters themselves. Reading the epistles aloud, students could impersonate the woman and her expressions, some young rhetors perhaps truly moved, others annoyed at being made to weep (as was the youthful Augustine), others in an all-male classroom situation no doubt finding the genderbending performance hilarious.<sup>12</sup> According to Jennifer Summit, classical letters by women contain within themselves the impulse for schoolboy diminishment, since the missives foreground the fleeting nature and eventual 'loss' of the women's own words after death.<sup>13</sup> However, while Augustine's irritation resists and a boisterous performance undercuts the passions of Ovid's women, contemporary attempts with this pedagogy, according to Kraus, 'have proved that schooling in female ethopoeia [...] encourages [...] mutual empathy between genders'.<sup>14</sup> Medieval performance pedagogy encouraged identification with women's feelings and imprinted the speeches of Dido, Medea, and others in the memories of grammar students until they one day surfaced as an inventional principle in mature poetry. As Marilyn Desmond's analysis of the medieval reception of Dido has shown, poets who cut their stylus on classroom classics often — in an Ovidian gesture — privileged the woman's story, even when it arose from a masculine, epic narrative.<sup>15</sup>

The list of late medieval authors invested in Ovid's strategy of writing speeches for marginalized women in the classical literary heritage is impressive. Indeed, the catalogue of those who re-vocalized the women's epistles in the *Heroides* includes Boccaccio, Chaucer, Christine de Pizan, Dante, Gower, and many others.<sup>16</sup> Suzanne C. Hagedorn compares the attraction of medieval writers to the women whose words they recited in school or private tutoring to a haunting; just as Aeneas encounters Dido's shade in the underworld in the *Aeneid* Book 6, so medieval poets return to Ovid's sacrificed women because of the power of their passion.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps

12 S. Aureli Augustini, *Confessionum libri XIII*, ed. by Martinus Skutella (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1969), 1.13. In this passage Augustine reports on his weeping for Dido during his school days. On this episode, see Woods, *Weeping for Dido*, Chapter 1. Schoolboy declamation of speeches by women would constitute medieval examples of 'ventriloquized voices', according to Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Routledge, 1992).

13 Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380–1589* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 29.

14 Kraus, 'Rehearsing the Other Sex', p. 464.

15 Marilyn Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 1–2.

16 For the influence of Canace's letter on John Lydgate, see Maura Nolan, 'Lydgate's Literary History: Chaucer, Gower, and Canacee', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 27 (2005), 59–92.

17 Hagedorn, *Abandoned Women: Rewriting the Classics*, p. 8. Lawrence Lipking argues (*Abandoned Women and Poetic Tradition* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989], pp. 3–4) that the 'desolate passion' of heroines such as Dido, though 'ineffectual [...]

less visited by spectres and more by the sometimes painful realities of women's lives, Christine de Pizan spent her career reclaiming respect for feminine subjects and in the *Epistre au dieu d'amours* seems to provide an epistolary sequel to the *Heroides* by delivering Cupid's response to Ovidian women.<sup>18</sup> While a widow seeking to support herself through writing, Christine would naturally turn to classical models (even if fictional) of female authors, but the motivations for John Gower and other male poets who repeatedly revisited the *Heroides* still require investigation. Hagedorn credits the *Heroides*, itself a master refashioning of earlier classical narratives, with teaching medieval authors such as Gower 'how to write from a revisionist perspective', since school children not only recited, but revised Ovid's epistles in composition exercises.<sup>19</sup>

I focus here on an additional rhetorical motivation: the quest to articulate believable and forceful female voices in poetry. I am using the term 'voice' here as I have previously about Gower's imitation of speech by the Saints John and the Virgin Mary: in the rhetorical sense of *personae*, masks adopted by an actor or author in order to represent another.<sup>20</sup> While many of Gower's accomplished female orators assume the Virgin's *persona*, other characters such as Canace in the *Confessio*'s revision of *Heroides* XI speak persuasively on secular topics through epistolary forms. Whether the Ovidian mask weakens the features of fictional women, as some feminists in classics contend, or whether it provides a strong projection of these women's thoughts, the *Heroides* offered pre-constructed models for women's voices in an epistolary form that is ostensibly written from women's private chambers to their most intimate associates.<sup>21</sup> In other words, for John Gower and others who had begun to produce women's speech by declaiming or composing their own versions of Ovid, the *Heroides* was a mine of feminine concerns and expressions that had been

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can acquire a power of its own'. For more analysis of ways in which Dido's story has overshadowed the foundational narrative of the *Aeneid*, see Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the Aeneid from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); John Watkins, *The Specter of Dido: Spenser and Virgilian Epic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Desmond, *Reading Dido*.

18 Sandra Hindman, *Christine de Pizan's 'Epistre d'Othéa': Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1986), p. 26.

19 Hagedorn, *Abandoned Women: Rewriting the Classics*, p. 12.

20 Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices*, pp. 1–53. Harvey provides a useful history of the treatment of 'voice' in modern feminist criticism and launches her argument that male renaissance authors ventriloquized female voices in ways that subvert female gender by imbuing speech with transvestitism. Harvey understands Ovid's *Heroides* and later texts featuring complaining women that might be authored and/or performed by men as a sort of rhetorical cross-dressing (pp. 10, 17, 38–40, 43, 119–20, 140, 154 n.).

21 For a feminist critique of Ovid's use of the letters, see Sara H. Lindheim, *Mail and Female: Epistolary Narrative and Desire in Ovid's Heroides* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

accepted by generations as the ingredients for secular female discourse and offered as a template for women's words in other poems. As Harold Jacobson notes, the *Heroides* advances the individual woman's point of view, even as civilizations are rising or falling around her.<sup>22</sup> For Gower, the worldly female speaker who projects her innermost thoughts in an epistle is a perfect counterpart to the Marian rhetoric foregrounding the Virgin's virtues and expressing rational and spiritual achievements. Through secular female voices constructed in epistolary arrangements, Gower celebrates the rhetorical feats of a broad spectrum of women. It will become apparent in this section's reflections on 'The Tale of Canace and Machaire' how, deploying Ovidian epistolary tactics, Gower privileges Canace's perspective and lifts her up as a model orator.

Gower reveals his adult reflections on declaiming and eventually revising letters by classical female characters when he composes epistles by women for both the *Cinkante Balades* and the *Confessio Amantis* and places these epistles amidst contexts that threaten to compromise or silence the female author.<sup>23</sup> In the next chapter, I will analyse letters by the female speaker in the *Cinkante Balades* that imitate French poetic traditions. My immediate purpose is to investigate Canace's letter in the *Confessio*'s Book 3 for ways that Gower fashions a feminine Ovidian epistolary rhetoric.<sup>24</sup> For all of the epistles from the *Heroides* that Gower reworks for *Confessio* 3 and 4, including Canace's to Machaire, Dido's to Aeneas, Phyllis's to Demophon, and Laodamia's to Protesilaus, Genius emphasizes Canace's direct discourse the most.<sup>25</sup> In 'The Tale of Canace and Machaire', Canace's words are reported more often than those of others

22 Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, p. 354.

23 On women's authorship in the *Confessio Amantis*, see Amanda Leff, 'Writing, Gender, and Power in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', *Exemplaria*, 20.1 (Spring 2008), 28–47. Leff focuses on a general anxiety expressed by Gower about women's authorship, not particularly about letter writing. She lists Canace, Philomela, and Thaise as the literary women of the *Confessio*. Besides the letter by Canace that I will focus on here, other female letter or message writers in the *Confessio* include Dido, Phyllis, and Laodamia in the tales from Book 4 mentioned above (n. 1) as well as Domilde of 'The Tale of Constance' (CA 2). Domilde refashions letters from court and from her son in order to serve her purpose of exiling Constance. Domilde is punished with her life and provides a negative example of what this chapter demonstrates, that the epistle form allows for women's effective expressions amidst the constraints of masculine rule and interpretations. Another example of an Ovidian letter writer in the *Confessio*, although male and a character from *Metamorphoses*, is Iphis, who sends messages to the disdainful Araxarathen (CA 4.3537). In *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle*, Camargo notes Gower's mastery of the formal letter in the *Cinkante Balades*. See Camargo, *Love Epistle*, pp. 35–45.

24 See Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (p. 175) for commentary on the special appeal of Canace's narrative voice. Gower may have been attracted to the youthful directness that Jacobson notices in Canace's letter in the *Heroides*.

25 Genius most often reports the words of Dido and other Ovidian women in the third person. See CA 4, ll. 77–146, 731–878, and 1901–34.

whom Genius paraphrases in the third person, and most pertinently, her entire letter, though shorter in Gower than in Ovid, is quoted in full, thus making Gower's revision of *Heroides* XI a special site for understanding the medieval poet's feminizing epistolary strategies.<sup>26</sup> The quotations from Canace's words, emotionally charged expressions in the first person, hark back to dramatic speeches by classical women delivered in medieval classrooms. As the heroine reads her letter aloud, she provides a model for declamation as well as for epistolary invention, arrangement, and style. With her accomplishments in all the offices of rhetoric, Canace gives the lie to Dido's declaration in Chaucer's *House of Fame* that women tempted to immoderate love 'konne noon art'.<sup>27</sup> This section will explore how Gower's revisions of Canace's letter from *Heroides* XI give authority to womanly speech under duress.<sup>28</sup>

Long after his youth, as we observed in Chapter Two, Gower was engaged in mature re-masterings of Ovid, the only classical poet with whom he shows deep familiarity, and therefore the one to consult for Gower's education and accomplishments in epistolary arts.<sup>29</sup> Having seen Gower's innovative and complex refashioning of Ovidian lines for the *Visio Anglie* and *Vox Clamantis*, we will not be surprised that Gower's Ovidian work in the *Confessio Amantis* spins a multivalent intertextual web. Not only does Gower adopt matter from Ovid's primary texts (the *Heroides*, *Metamorphoses*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Fasti*) for the *Confessio Amantis*'s narratives, but he also structures those narratives in a manuscript scheme much like the heavily glossed and moralized medieval Ovids. With Latin verse headings to many sections of the poem and glosses in Latin, *Confessio* manuscripts often imitate the *Ovide Moralisé* or commentaries such as

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- 26 Next to Canace's letter, Dido's to Aeneas in Gower contains the most words by the female author, herself, only the last two lines: CA 4, ll. 145–46.
- 27 Geoffrey Chaucer, *The House of Fame in The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry C. Benson (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1986), l. 335. On Dido's ignorance of the arts of persuasion and Chaucer's consequent view that the woman abandoned by Aeneas lacks authority, see Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 93–107.
- 28 Although Summit has warned us about conflating analyses of speech and writing (See Summit, *Lost Property*, p. 8), Gower's 'Tale of Canace and Machaire' actually encourages us to think about them together, since she 'wrot and seide' the letter (CA 3, l. 278).
- 29 There are too many discussions of Gower's debts to Ovid to detail completely here, but many have proven that Ovid was Gower's most-cited model and source. For an early influential article see Conrad Mainzer, 'John Gower's Use of the "Mediaeval Ovid" in *Confessio Amantis*', *Medium Ævum*, 41 (1972), 215–22. For a recent treatment, see T. Matthew N. McCabe, *Gower's Vulgar Tongue: Ovid, Lay Religion, and English Poetry in the Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011). Bruce Harbert ('Lessons from the Great Clerk: Ovid and John Gower', *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], p. 86) writes that Gower's reading of Ovid is broad and deep, but '[t]here is no indication that [Gower] had extensive knowledge of any Latin poet except Ovid'.

John of Garland's *Integumenta Ovidii*, wildly popular in fourteenth-century England.<sup>30</sup> In the *Confessio* Gower mimics Garland's moralizing strategy, a process in which Ovid's poems are distilled into a smaller space and capped with a Christian lesson. In Genius's confession of Amans, revised Ovidian narratives are accompanied by a penitential lecture on one of the seven deadly sins against love; in 'The Tale of Canace and Machaire' Gower draws a lesson from their sad story through Genius's sermon against melancholy, a species of wrath identified in the *Confessio*'s Book 3.<sup>31</sup> However, always tacking toward his own purposes, Gower does not use his Ovidian models or textual structures slavishly. In any case, the complex texture of Ovid's poems can never be completely restrained through adaptation or didactic rubrics, even if Gower desired that control; Gower's harnessing of the Ovidian corpus necessarily gives free rein to many of Ovid's lines and characters such as Canace. As Winthrop Wetherbee observes: 'no amount of moralizing can wholly contain Ovid's irony and pathos, so the similar framing of the narratives of the *Confessio* produces a continual tension [...]'.<sup>32</sup> For Wetherbee, medieval Ovidian texts modelled for Gower an oppositional perspective that not even the framing device of the confessional or the interpretive boundaries stipulated by the Latin glosses could quiet, opening up the possibility of friction between Genius's and Amans's vernacular voices and the Latin apparatus.<sup>33</sup> Such tension is exacerbated by the sometimes clashing styles and meanings of the *Confessio*'s Latin poems and glosses and by the divergent readings that these Latin texts propose for sections of the Middle English poem.<sup>34</sup> It is amidst the incompatible voices involved in the frame of the manuscript and narrative and in the telling and response to Ovidian stories that Gower refashions Canace's letter to Macareus and finds a way for the woman's voice to both express and escape the *Confessio*'s competing viewpoints.

30 C. de Boer, ed., *Ovide moralisé* (repr. Wiesbaden: M. Sändig, 1966–68); John of Garland, *Integumenta Ovidii*, ed. by Fausto Ghisalberti (Milan: Messina, 1933).

31 While there are 130 lines in *Heroides* XI, there are 193 in 'The Tale of Canace and Machaire'. Gower's version is therefore 63 lines longer, but part of this difference may be attributed to the facts that the shorter octosyllabic line used by Gower could not express the same amount of content as Ovid's elegaic couplets and that Latin can articulate the same idea in fewer words than in English.

32 Winthrop Wetherbee, 'Gower Teaching Ovid and the Classics', in *Approaches to Teaching the Poetry of John Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager and Brian Gastle (New York: MLA, 2011), p. 173.

33 Winthrop Wetherbee, 'Latin Structure and Vernacular Space: Gower, Chaucer and the Boethian Tradition', in *Chaucer and Gower: Difference, Mutuality, Exchange*, ed. by R. F. Yeager, ELS Monograph Series 51 (Victoria, B.C.: English Literary Studies, 1991), pp. 26–30. On Ovid commentaries in general, see Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Reading Myth: Classical Mythology and Its Interpretations in Medieval French Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 8, 94.

34 Siân Echard, 'With Carmen's Help: Latin Authorities in the *Confessio Amantis*', *Studies in Philology*, 95.1 (Winter 1998), 1–40.

The means for both expression and escape is the epistolary function, in other words, the act of delivery, performed by Canace herself and expected from the messenger knight who witnesses and hears her composition. ‘The Tale of Canace and Machaire’ alludes in multiple ways to delivery, the epistolary function liberating Canace’s voice at the site of narrative tension.<sup>35</sup> Canace pens her letter to her brother Machaire after having been abandoned by him, given birth to their son, and received a sword from her father on which she is meant to commit suicide. Her letter clearly expresses her devotion to her brother and directives for burial, where competing messages seem to wrest a coherent meaning from the tale and ponderous framing devices threaten to drown Canace’s words. By presenting her passion for her brother as a bald fact, Canace’s letter cuts through the incoherence arising from the plethora of masculine observations surrounding her, including Genius’s contradictory moralizing on sibling incest and the Latin apparatus’s focus on her father’s ire.<sup>36</sup> Though she must ‘be ded’ for her affair with Machaire, she claims, she will love him while ‘lasteth eny breth.’<sup>37</sup> As I demonstrate in *Incest Narratives and the Structure of Gower’s Confessio Amantis*, Genius’s sympathetic comments concerning Canace and Machaire’s sibling liaison are at odds with the negative imagery he uses to describe their love and with his own preaching against incest in Books 5 and 8.<sup>38</sup> However, while Genius’s contradictory messages make interpreting Canace’s passion for her brother difficult, Canace herself refuses to be interpreted, but rather, accepts responsibility for misdirecting her youthful passion, asserts her fidelity, and articulates her last wish that, should her baby son die, he might be laid to rest alongside her. Moreover, these declarations slice through not only Genius’s uncertain expressions, but also the heavy framing around ‘The Tale of Canace and Machaire’ that includes the Latin poem on ire that begins Book 3, Genius’s and Amans’s discussion of ‘Malencolie’ (the subset of wrath upon which this tale is intended to comment), the especially long Latin gloss decrying the father’s outrage as well as excusing the siblings’ sexual urges, and an increasing

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35 Recent readings of the CA’s ‘Tale of Canace and Machaire’ include Matthew W. Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower: Politics and Personae in the Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp. 146–56.

36 As Peter Nicholson comments, ‘The Tale of Canace and Machaire’ ‘resists any attempt to squeeze it into the mold of a conventional exemplum’. See Peter Nicholson, *Love & Ethics in Gower’s Confessio Amantis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), p. 181. The acceptance of sibling incest and the concentration on Aeolis’s ire are features of *Heroides* XI. In fact, Ovid was the first poet to characterize a Canace who returns her love for her brother. See Florence Verducci, *Ovid’s Toyshop of the Heart: Epistulae Heroidum* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 199–200.

37 CA 3, ll. 286, 289.

38 Georgiana Donavin, *Incest Narratives and the Structure of Gower’s Confessio Amantis* (Victoria, B.C.: ELS, 1993). Chapter 3 focuses on ‘The Tale of Canace and Machaire’.



focus on the sin of incest as the *Confessio* proceeds. Although critics such as Jeremy Dimmick and James Simpson argue that letters like Canace's can have no effect, the feminine voice merely reverberating inside layers of masculine commentary and echoing down the various canyons of her own purposes divided by love, Gower's Canace speaks directly to the men who interpret her, the conflicting emotions they inspire, and her own lamentable position.<sup>39</sup>

Paradoxically, the voice of Gower's Canace cannot be hushed precisely because her letter springs out of conflicts and constraints, beginning as she does with the oxymorons of love. The following quotation demonstrates a Gowerian rhetorical strategy outlined in Chapter One: repetitions of a line's opening segment. In the passage below, apostrophes to the absent Machaire mingle with anaphora to invoke the strange development of their love and intensify the audience's pity.

O thou my sorwe and my gladnesse,  
 O thou myn hele and my siknesse,  
 O my wanhope and al my trust,  
 O my desese and al my lust,  
 O thou my wele, o thou my wo,  
 O thou my frend, o thou my fo,  
 O thou my love, o thou myn hate,  
 For thee mot I be ded algate.<sup>40</sup>

39 See Jeremy Dimmick, 'Ovid in the Middle Ages: Authority and Poetry', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. by Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Discussing the *accessus ad auctores* for the *Heroides*, Dimmick contends that in this kind of commentary, 'female voices [...] are controlled by a male moralist's invisible hand' (p. 268). In addition, see James Simpson, 'Breaking the Vacuum: Ricardian and Henrician Ovidianism', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 29.2 (1999), 332. Simpson describes the 'impotence' of bureaucratic genres such as Canace's letter in Ovidian literature. Because the narrative voice arising out of them reflects an identity fractured and tyrannized by Cupid, he asserts, the well-recognized form is empty of communication. Also, on the Ovidian characterization of Amans and Genius and on divisions between the subjects of love and politics in Gower's *Confessio*, see James Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's Anticlaudianus and John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 134–58. By investing Canace's voice with force, Gower contrasts strongly with Chaucer's treatment of women from the *Heroides*. See John Fyler, *Chaucer and Ovid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 109. Fyler points out that the more Chaucer allows Ovid's heroines to speak in their own voices, the more these heroines seem controlled.

40 CA 3, ll. 279–86. Robert Glendinning points out that the oxymorons of love, representing ambivalent feelings toward desire as expressed in the classical world, resurface with the revival of Ovidian texts in medieval pedagogy and literature. See Robert Glendinning, 'Eros, Agape, and Rhetoric around 1200: Gervase of Melkley's *Ars poetica* and Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*, *Speculum*, 67.4 (Oct. 1992), 892.

In this quotation from Canace's letter, Gower deploys the features expected of feminine ethopoeia since progymnasmata instruction in Athens; according to Kraus, these are 'a highly emotional language characterised by short, even elliptical sentences, by questions and exclamations, by frequent use of anaphora and repetition'.<sup>41</sup> With a series of initial apostrophe — a rhetorical move in keeping with the repetitious plain style preferred by Gower — Canace constructs her heightened passion, elicits her brother's feelings and sense of responsibility, looks to her impending death, and declares her un/dying loyalty.<sup>42</sup> As desire's oppositional clichés pull Canace toward either side, they release a rhetorical position between sorrow and gladness, love and hate, marked by the conjunction 'and' from which Canace writes and subsumes her brother's antithetical identities. The recurring 'O' inaugurating the oxymoronic apostrophes provides a powerful keynote for invention and syntax for delivery. One line begets another as the 'O' creates an open channel for Canace's embodied voice, soon to be cut off by the sword, and preserves Canace's ardent *pronunciatio*.

The opening oxymorons signal both despair in impending annihilation, as Summit notes, and hope in conveying feelings in the aftermath, the letter announcing itself as a post mortem supplement for Canace's flesh and sound.<sup>43</sup> Into this supplement, Canace implants an ethos of loyalty although competing impulses, including disappointment with her lover, rend her. Her simply constructed, emotional, and reiterative outburst belongs in a type of 'ethical style' described by Hermogenes and propagated in Ovid's feminine epistles because of the sincerity it portrays.<sup>44</sup> Amidst the confusion of a sibling love affair and in between her father's rage and her brother's fear, she puts forth her ardent attachment. The final line of the letter's introduction employs internal rhyme to underscore the commitment that lends Canace authority — 'For thee / mot I be'. With the set of apostrophes at the beginning of Canace's letter, Gower establishes a position from which his heroine can arise from mortal conflict to express a devotion that, while it may not redeem her from the crime of sibling incest, pits a sacrificial love against horrific consequences.

Through Gower's rearrangement of epistolary discourse in Canace's oxymoronic apostrophes, we note the dual effect of recording Canace's

41 Kraus, 'Rehearsing the Other Sex', p. 460.

42 See Marilyn R. Desmond, 'The *Translatio* of Memory and Desire in *The Legend of Good Women*: Chaucer and the Vernacular *Heroides*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 35 (2013), 181. There, Desmond identifies the heightened passion of women in the *Heroides* with *meretrices*. In 'The Tale of Canace and Machaire' by eliminating many of Ovid's lines concerning Canace's lineage and underscoring, instead, the workings of 'kinde', Gower seems to bear not so much on Canace's social status as on the strange consequences for her of natural law.

43 Summit, *Lost Property*, p. 36.

44 Hermogenes, *On Types of Style*, trans. by Cecil W. Wooten III (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), II, 3, pp. 9–324.

loyalty amidst love's entanglements and tragically diminishing the object of her affection, Machaire, to whom the letter is directed. Gower's Canace bypasses the opening salutation of the letter in the *Heroides* that respectfully addresses her brother Macareus by underscoring the patrilineage — as well as the passionate love — that binds this sister to her brother. 'Aeolis Aeolidae,' Ovid's heroine begins, 'An Aeolid to an Aeolid.'<sup>45</sup> Gower's Canace, on the other hand, does not offer her brother the deference of a formal salutation; she does not even name him, as would be appropriate for any premodern letter. The omission of the family name demonstrates both realization of the incestuous infraction and disappointment in the one she came to adore, even though their love be forbidden. Her ardour remains, even if her admiration has been challenged by Machaire's base action of abandonment. While Ovid's Macareus remains nearby to comfort his sister as she gives birth to their child, Gower's Machaire 'feigneth cause for to ride' once Canace's 'wombe aros.'<sup>46</sup> In Gower, both sister and brother are anxious about the pregnancy, Canace hiding in her chamber and refusing to name the father, Machaire absconding in hopes that his paternity will not be revealed. Their separate and gendered reactions to fright expose his betrayal: while she attempts to protect him with silence, he leaves her unprotected from judgement. As Lawrence Lipking notices, literary representations of abandonment often channel criticism toward the hero and male action, the painful reactions of forlorn women giving voice to the costs of male 'achievement.'<sup>47</sup> By refashioning *Heroides* XI as a tale of desertion, Gower aligns Canace's story with other abandoned women in Ovid such as Dido, whose compelling final speech rings down the literary ages. Moreover, although Sara H. Lindheim observes that the 'iterative quality' of Ovid's consecutively abandoned heroines and the influence of the male recipients of their letters serve to shrink these authoring women, Gower repeats Ovid's iterative abandoned woman only to increase his heroine's stature.<sup>48</sup> In Gower's revision where Machaire is reduced to panic, Canace gains more authority in her commitment to face their consequences alone: an authority that Gower implants despite Ovid's declaration that Aeolis is the author of the daughter's experiences.<sup>49</sup>

45 Ovid, *Heroides* XI, ll. 1–2.

46 CA 3, ll. 190, 195. In Euripides' play *Aeolus*, once a source for Canace's letter in Ovid, but now available only in fragments, Macareus kills himself immediately after Canace's suicide. Since Macareus's death is not reported in Ovid and Gower would not have known the Greek play, the medieval poet has reconstructed a character who is cowardly and undeserving of his sister's fidelity.

47 Lipking, *Abandoned Women*, xvi, xv.

48 Lindheim, *Mail and Female*, pp. 6, 8–10, 14. On the repetitive nature of the *Heroides*, see also Linda S. Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 42, pp. 44, 61.

49 Ovid, *Heroides* XI, ll. 9–10.

The consequences are rendered dramatic — in a more empathetic way than the schoolroom exercises in the *Heroides* — by so much reported speech for Canace. In a particularly moving scene, she entreats her father not to harm her, though she acknowledges her culpability in incest:

Ha mercy! Fader, thenk I am  
 Thi child, and of thi blod I cam.  
 That I misdede yowthe it made,  
 And in the flodes bad me wade,  
 Wher that I sih no peril tho.  
 Bot now it is befallle so,  
 Merci, my fader, do no wreche!<sup>50</sup>

Here Canace demonstrates that (five books of octosyllabic verse before Amans) she has learned at least part of the lesson taught in Ovidian glosses and Genius's preaching: she recognizes that it is the foolish choice of a beloved that has led to this pass, even if she has not allowed her passion to 'akiele'.<sup>51</sup> Though the binding tie of blood is not mentioned in an epistolary salutation, in Canace's plea to Aeolis, paternity and the penitent's acknowledgment of guilt provide reasons for mercy. As if to underscore that Gower furnishes Canace more words than Dido, Phyllis, or Laodamia, others from the *Heroides* whose letters are briefly described in Book 4, Genius remarks that Aeolis's daughter 'loste speche' and 'doun swounende' at the end of her entreaty.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, when Canace addresses the knight conveying the sword from her father, her words underline the fact that she, herself, is writing and speaking; after promising to obey her 'fadres wille,' Canace informs the knight, 'I wole a lettre unto mi brother, / So as my fieble hand may wryte, / With al my wofull herte endite'.<sup>53</sup>

The implied expectation is that just as this knight transported the sword as a sign of Aeolis's verdict, so he might deliver the letter as an embodiment of Canace's last wishes. The addressee of the letter, unlike Ovid's steadfast Macareus, is far away and in need of the terrible news about to be inscribed. If the sword 'mente' and carries the 'entente' of Aeolis's judgement, the missive also relays its sender's instructions:

If that my litel sone deie,  
 Let him be beried in my grave  
 Beside me, so schalt thou have  
 Upon ous bothe remembrance.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> CA 3, ll. 231.

<sup>51</sup> CA 4, ll. 2669–71.

<sup>52</sup> CA 3, ll. 232–33.

<sup>53</sup> CA 3, ll. 262–70.

<sup>54</sup> CA 3, ll. 292–95.

Like this fictional knight / herald or a schoolboy preparing a declamation, Machaire is enjoined to remember the contents of the letter and those who were sacrificed for love. Substituting for the voice and de-composing body of the sister / lover in the grave, the epistle, as Janet Gurkin Altman notes of letters in eighteenth-century novels, attempts an impossible abridgement of time as it speaks to Machaire in the present tense about an undetermined future, but must refer to events tragically past.<sup>55</sup> The knight / herald stands at the crossroads of temporality as he witnesses and hears what Canace 'wrot and seide' and bears the charge of informing his young master of these sorrowful events.<sup>56</sup>

Invoking her own present scene toward the end of the letter, Canace claims to write with both 'teres' and 'enke'; additionally, she depicts herself poised with the pen in her right hand, the sword in her left, and the babe on her lap.<sup>57</sup> This fatal scenario for authorship comes immediately from Ovid, with one important exception that A. C. Spearing has noticed: though in *Heroides* XI, the child has been sent to his death before the composition of the missive and Canace describes a blood sprinkled scroll that is lying in her lap, in 'The Tale of Canace and Machaire,' the son still lives, occupies the place of the scroll, and bathes in blood after his mother dies.<sup>58</sup> 'It is clear,' Spearing writes, 'that Gower grasped Ovid's metaphorical identification of the letter with the baby,' and Gower reinforces this identification when Genius speaks of the infant's being 'delivered'.<sup>59</sup> With this pun on delivery as both parturition and textual conveyance or recitation, Gower approaches the Ovidian mix of pathos and wit that has so occupied critics, from John Dryden to today.<sup>60</sup> The reader may feel torn between pity for the newly born babe and amusement at the verbal play on flesh and text, an open mouth declaiming a letter and an opened vagina giving passage to a child. In 'The Tale of Canace and Machaire,' both child and letter are products of Canace's labour, and both are extensions of her life at the same time that they are harbingers of death. After her suicide, the horrific image in Gower of the baby bathing in his mother's blood is

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55 Altman, *Epistolarity*, pp. 117–18, 122–42, 187. Her book outlines and develops the significance of the formal features of epistles in literature. For a postmodern exploration of epistolarity, see Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

56 CA 3, l. 278.

57 CA 3, ll. 298, 300–03.

58 A. C. Spearing, 'Canace and Machaire', *Mediaevalia*, 16 (1993), 211, 218–19.

59 Spearing, 'Canace and Machaire', p. 219; CA 3, l. 202.

60 John Dryden, *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. by Edward Niles Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), I, p. 110. See also L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), pp. 98–99, 106; Verducci, *Ovid's Toyshop*, p. 32; Marina Scordilis Brownlee, *The Severed Word: Ovid's Heroides and the Novela Sentimental* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 27.

a description that captures the disjunctive style of wit and pathos. By emphasizing at once Canace's authorship, motherhood, and delivery, Gower privileges the transmission and fertility of Canace's literary output, as the requirement of conveying a letter to Machaire establishes the beginning of a reception history that culminates in the *Confessio's* Book 3.<sup>61</sup>

By jettisoning a formal address to Machaire and beginning amidst Canace's complaint, Gower renders her letter only a part of the tale, not its master form as in Ovid, but doing so has not diminished the import of the epistolary genre or the significance of Canace's voice. On the contrary, Gower invests Canace's letter with purpose by distilling it into an economical missive; positioning it amidst conflicts over the tale's meaning; showing its addressee, cowering in fear far away, to be much in need of a letter with news from court; and insisting on the superior ethos of its author, even as it acknowledges that author's misdirected love.<sup>62</sup> While Gower imports other missives from the *Heroides* into the *Confessio Amantis*, it is Canace's letter, quoted in full, where we can see the medieval poet participating in the pedagogical heritage, where delivery of women's speech might be ambivalent, and ripening his epistolary strategies to craft an ethical female voice that provides a secular counterpart to his Marian rhetors.

## Advice to Regents

In addition to translation and declamation exercises from classical literature, a young pupil — especially a noble soon to take up the regent's role — would be exposed to the *specula principum*, or mirrors for princes, manuals for governance that could be dedicated or written in an epistolary style.<sup>63</sup> As Herbert Grabes has demonstrated, works entitled *speculum* 'are

61 The effects of Gower's revision of Canace's letter countermand a conclusion by Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property*, p. 30: talking about Chaucer's recreation of Dido's letter in 'The Legend of Dido', she says that 'women's loss gives rise to a kind of writing that is the inverse of fame [...], takes place on the brink of mortality, securing not fame but self-loss'.

62 Spearing, 'Canace and Machaire', p. 212.

63 Katherine Breen ('A Different Kind of Book for Richard's Sake: MS Bodley 581 as Ethical Handbook', *Chaucer Review*, 45.2 [2010], 119, n. 3) notes that it was more common for mirrors for princes to be addressed to heirs rather than to crowned princes. The fact that Gower addressed advice literature directly to the current monarch could reflect on Richard's youth or the common contemporary belief that failures in Richard's government arose from bad advice. On crises in the Ricardian court connected to bad advice, see George Stowe, ed., *Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), pp. 2, 121–22; George Stow, 'Richard II in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: Some Historical Perspectives', *Medievalia*, 16 (1993), 3–31; Anthony Goodman, 'Richard II's Councils' in *Richard II: The Art of Kingship*, ed. by Anthony Goodman and James Gillespie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 59–82; and Lynn Staley, 'Gower, Richard II, Henry of Derby, and the Business of Making Culture', *Speculum*, 75 (2000), 68–96.

by far the most frequent type of book-title in the Middle Ages after *Liber* and *Summa*.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, after 1300 'a flood of mirror titles', the majority of which surface in England, head up *encyclopediae*, collections of *exempla*, prophecies, and imaginative reflections.<sup>65</sup> These titles herald a book that doubles as a mirror and reproduces a 'compressed but comprehensive presentation of a larger reality', in the case of a *speculum principum*, the 'larger reality' reflecting the prince's rightful place and conduct in his principality and his world.<sup>66</sup> Gower contributed to the deluge of mirror-books by entitling his first major work *Mirour de l'Omme*, or the *Speculum Meditantis*, including a manual for princes in the *Confessio*'s Book 7, and composing a letter of advice to Richard II in *Vox Clamantis* 6, chapters 8–18A, the text upon which this section will focus.<sup>67</sup>

Gower's *Epistola ad regem*, its earliest version intended as advice for the youthful Richard II, directs the support and guidance of 'John' toward his kingly devotee and blends the narrator's biblical authority with Aristotle's philosophy. In this section we will see how Gower's imitation of the epistolary *Secretum Secretorum*, a text that the poet attributed to Aristotle, lends academic credentials to teachings that 'John' composes specifically for Richard. While Gower revised Ovidian letters to capture powerful female expressions, in addition, he simulated Aristotle's messages to Alexander to channel the best advisor's voice. As this hybrid expert addresses proverbs and imperatives for good behaviour to an audience that it constructs as a biddable young king, the *Epistola* fashions an image of great potential for Richard — one that will mature into a ruler more disciplined than Alexander, as wise as Solomon, and as brave as the Black Prince, if only the young king will lend his ear to the text's admonishments. The epistolary function, creating the possibility of intimate tutoring from afar, allows Gower both distance from and access to his monarch, a modest position from which to project bold advice.

*Vox Clamantis* 6. 8–18A, an *Epistola ad regem*, is, according to Janet Coleman, positioned in the penultimate book of Gower's major Latin poem to be 'the undisputed heart of the *Vox Clamantis*', to teach the young king Richard how to address the sins of an ailing society through justice under the law.<sup>68</sup> Since John the Baptist is the patron saint of

64 Herbert Grabes, *The Mutable Glass: Mirror-imagery in titles and texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance*, trans. by Gordon Collier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 19.

65 Grabes, *The Mutable Glass*, pp. 26, 39. Grabes mentions Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme* on p. 54.

66 Grabes, *The Mutable Glass*, p. 43.

67 For a helpful summary of Book 7 of the *Confessio Amantis* as *speculum principum*, see Samantha J. Rayer, *Images of Kingship in Chaucer and his Ricardian Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2008), pp. 5–34.

68 Janet Coleman, *English Literature in History, 1350–1400: Medieval Readers and Writers* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1981), p. 154.

Richard II, it is appropriate that ‘John’, whose persona reflects the Forerunner, the Evangelist, and, as we shall see, Aristotle, speak directly to the monarch concerning both spiritual and administrative matters. Through an epistolary arrangement taught in dictaminal instruction and modelled in the mirrors for princes, Gower can express John the Baptist’s care for Richard II while couching criticisms in a speech ostensibly crafted for the monarch’s ear alone. In Kurt Olsson’s estimation, ‘it is also fitting that Gower should end his *planctus* against all estates with an epistle to the king in Book VI [since] Richard, despite his age, is finally accountable for men returning to their places in the hierarchy [...]’.<sup>69</sup> The *Epistola* — so central to the *Vox* and important to Gower’s goal of mitigating apocalyptic horrors by instructing the monarch in better rule — is crafted according to the principles of Gower’s ‘Rethorique’: it relies on the mystical Word as expressed in proverbs, and it offers plain speech to the head of government in a critical time.

Although contemporary scholars may find the *Epistola ad regem* only in manuscripts and editions of the *Vox Clamantis*, the letter may have once comprised an independent *speculum principum* for Richard II. The *Epistola* consists of 518 lines, or as David Carlson notes, ‘the standard length [of] a single-booklet presentation manuscript’.<sup>70</sup> In other words, Gower may have composed the *Epistola* in order to present Richard with a *speculum principum* and later inserted this letter into the middle of Book 6 of the *Vox*. Even once inserted, the *Epistola*, as Maria Wickert notes, maintains a separate quality; she writes: ‘[N]owhere [in the *Vox*] does there occur an open letter of the Mirror’s extent, so entirely complete in itself and so clearly detached from its context’.<sup>71</sup> Only early manuscripts of the *Vox*, recorded in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 214 and Hertfordshire, Hatfield House, Cecil Papers, MS 300 once owned by the Marquess of Salisbury, contain the text of the original *Epistola* that was conceivably composed as a stand-alone *speculum* for Richard II at the beginning of his reign; the final chapter of the *Epistola* (18A) later underwent revisions indicating Gower’s growing disappointments with the monarch’s rule and creating the text of 18B. We will concentrate on the early version here (18A), treating it as Carlson suggests, as a unified missive. Studying the *Epistola* also paves our way for the next chapter’s treatment of ‘Rex Celi Deus’, since the

69 Kurt Olsson, ‘John Gower’s *Vox Clamantis* and the Medieval Idea of Place’, *Studies in Philology*, 84.2 (Spring 1987), 137.

70 David R. Carlson, ‘Gower’s Early Latin Poetry: Text-Genetic Hypotheses of an *Epistola ad regem* (ca. 1377–1380) from the Evidence of John Bale’, *Mediaeval Studies*, 65 (2003), 295.

71 Maria Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, trans. by Robert J. Meindl, 2nd edn (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2016), p. 101. Because of the detachable, independent nature of this epistolary *speculum*, the sermonic and tearful tone of the Johannine narrator that is so carefully amplified in the *Visio Anglie* and preserved throughout the original *Vox* blends in the *Epistola* with the *propria persona* of the poet who sought to project Aristotelian counsel.



latter poem takes twenty-one lines from the discarded conclusion to the *speculum*.

In both the ordination of the manuscripts and the rhetoric of Book 6, Gower emphasizes the epistolarity of his *speculum* for Richard. The gloss to the beginning of the *speculum* announces that the poet presents his advice to the king in a sort of a letter:

Since all the world's people of all ranks are governed under the justice of royal sovereignty, he consequently intends at the present time to write a kind of letter to our now-reigning king, elevated for the sake of instruction, by which he, our king, who is now in his youthful years, may be more clearly prepared for his royal responsibilities when hereafter, by mediating divine grace, he has reached his more mature years [...].<sup>72</sup>

As the gloss notes, through generic disjunction and an 'elevated' construction of its audience, chapters 8–18A of Book 6 of the *Vox* are raised up for the king's instruction. Until this point in the *Vox*'s critique of English justice, in both the text and the glosses, Richard has been referred to in the third person, but the epistolary form that follows the gloss to 6.8 employs direct address and content crafted more strategically for the monarch. In other words, while the discourse is 'elevated' as a mode of respect, it is also straightforward, observing Gower's preferred Ciceronian model of elocution. Although the previous section of the *Vox* (Chapter 7, with its A and B texts) along with the conclusion to the *speculum* were heavily revised sometime after 1381 to reflect Gower's decreasing esteem for Richard, the epistle of *Vox* 6. 8–18A frames a picture of a young and teachable king, a mostly hopeful representation that gives the letter purpose.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> VC, headnote to 6.8. Emphasis mine. Translations from VC 6. 8–18 will be taken from Robert J. Meindl, trans., *Vox Clamantis* 6, *The Gower Project Translation Wiki*, <<http://gowertranslation.pbworks.com/w/page/53715438/Vox%20Clamantis%20Translations>>. The Latin gloss states: *Hic loquitur quod ex quo omnes quicumque mundi status sub regie magestatis iusticia moderantur, intendit ad presens regnaturo iam Regi nostro quondam epistolam doctrine causa editam scribere consequentur, ex qua ille rex noster, qui modo in sua puerili constituatur etate, cum vberiores postea sumpserit annos, gracia mediante divina, in suis regalibus exercendis euedencias instruat* [...].

<sup>73</sup> Maria Wickert comments that the open letter to Richard has a much more hopeful tone than the rest of the VC, which presents human nature as incorrigible. See Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, p. 102. On revisions to VC, 6 reflecting Gower's decreasing esteem for Richard, see Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 111. There she discusses the characterization of Richard in a revised section of VC, 6.7 (immediately before the epistle) in which Gower calls the king an ignorant (*indoctus*) boy. This is harsher than the unrevised version that depicts Richard as a naive youth in need of better advice. In any case, it would have been inappropriate to think of Richard as a boy in the early 1390s when this passage may have been revised. According to John H. Fisher, the revisions of the *Epistola ad*

Gower wrote this *speculum* at the beginning of the Ricardian reign when, as Lynn Staley suggests, ‘the king’s image, his public face, seems to have become the object of negotiation [and ...] the king himself became an active participant in this process of negotiation’.<sup>74</sup> In other words, the epistle in *Vox* 6. 8–18A enables Richard to project to the Latinate reading public an image parallel to such champions as his father and important biblical heroes. Since ‘the mirror was also part of a metaphorical tradition in which it represented the cognitive faculty itself, both as mind and as sense-perception, and occasionally divine omniscience as well’, the poet and monarch collaborated — whether intentionally or not — in forming a public understanding of the king’s image, providing the details through which it might be perceived, and connecting the vision reflected in the *Vox* to divine providence.<sup>75</sup>

The fictional or real historical delivery of the epistle in *Vox* 6 to Richard that would have enabled this coordinated projection re-enacts Aristotle’s legendary sending of the *Secretum Secretorum* to Alexander on the battlefield, a source that (as we have seen in Chapter One) supports Gower’s mystical view of language. In the *Confessio* Book 7, written several years later, Gower will again play the Philosopher’s part as Genius conveys Aristotle’s advice to Alexander upon the lover’s request, and though the priest of love claims not to have much preparation in the matter, he discourses broadly on the seven liberal arts.<sup>76</sup> In the *Epistola ad regem*, Gower’s narrator makes no disavowals of expertise, but boldly claims the

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*regem* contributes to the ‘unified commentary’ provided by manuscripts containing the VC and CrT on ‘the tragic course of Richard’s rule from 1381–1400 [...]’: (John Gower: *Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* [New York: New York University Press, 1964], p. 114).

- <sup>74</sup> Staley, ‘Business of Making Culture’, p. 69. On the mirrors for princes tradition, see, for instance, W. Kleineke, *Englische Fürstenspiegel vom Policraticus Johannis von Salisbury bis zum Basiliakon Doron König Jakobs I.* (Halle/Saale: Niemeyer, 1937) and F. Lachaud and L. Scordia, ed., *Le Prince au miroir de la littérature politique de l’Antiquité aux Lumières*. (Mont-Saint-Aignan: University of Rouen / University of Havre Press, 2007). On Gower’s use of the mirrors for princes in general or in the *Confessio Amantis*, see George R. Coffman, ‘Gower in His Most Significant Role’, in *Elizabethan Studies and Other Essays in Honor of George F. Reynolds*, ed. by E. J. West (Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Press, 1945), pp. 52–61; Fisher, *John Gower*, pp. 196–98; Russell A. Peck, *Kingship and Common Profit in Gower’s Confessio Amantis* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978); A. J. Minnis, ‘John Gower, Sapiens in Ethics and Politics’, *Medium Ævum*, 49 (1980), 207–29; M. A. Manzalaoui, ‘“Noght in the Registre of Venus”: Gower’s English Mirror for Princes’, in *Medieval Studies for J. A. W. Bennett (Aetatis Suae LXX)*, ed. by P. L. Heyworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 159–83; Elizabeth Porter, ‘Gower’s Ethical Microcosm and Political Macrocosm’, in *Gower’s Confessio Amantis: Responses and Reassessments*, ed. by A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 153–60; Frank Grady, ‘The Lancastrian Gower and the Limits of Exemplarity’, *Speculum*, 70.3 (1995), 552–75.

- <sup>75</sup> Grabes, *The Mutable Glass*, p. 131.

- <sup>76</sup> Manzalaoui, ‘Noght in the Registre of Venus’, pp. 161, 169–73. See also A. H. Gilbert, ‘Notes on the Influence of the *Secretum Secretorum*’, *Speculum*, 3 (1928), 84–98.

position of favoured adviser and offers a more abbreviated, less academic curriculum derived from the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum Secretorum* on the virtues expected in a king. Although *specula principum* such as John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*, and Brunetto Latini's *Trésor* infused classical teachings into fourteenth-century English courts, Gower's epistolary model for the *Vox*'s mirror was the *Secretum Secretorum*, I argue, because of the latter's trust in the magical potency of language delivered in a missive form. Speaking openly to Richard through charm-like proverbs and scriptural allusions, Gower harnesses linguistic power about which Aristotle ostensibly theorized and attempts to move the king toward right action, when all seems to fail around them. Having been composed as a stand-alone Aristotelian missive to Richard, the new Alexander, and incorporated into the *Vox Clamantis*, the *Epistola* participates in the larger apocalyptic project — with instruction to the king a crucial method of warding off the depredations of the Antichrist. With allusions to Aristotle's *Secretum Secretorum*, Gower, who speaks as 'John' throughout the *Vox Clamantis*, adds academic authority to his biblical ethos as well as to his presentation of numinous speech. By imitating a text that reports epistolary exchanges between Aristotle and Alexander, the missive of *Vox* 6. 8–18A aggrandizes its author and addressee, sets the adviser at a safe distance from which he could deliver such warnings as 'Self ruled be king, if king you wish to be', and protects the king from direct criticism.<sup>77</sup> In addition, Gower's epistolary strategy of authorship, delivery, and royal reader response represents the passing down of wisdom from age to age, with each era accruing its own advice, while at the same time harking back to the authority of the classical world.

The *Secretum Secretorum* is based on the ninth-century Arabic *Sirr al-asrār* purporting to be Aristotle's book of advice to Alexander and to contain personal letters sent between the famous philosopher and his mighty pupil.<sup>78</sup> Although the *Secretum Secretorum* was sometimes valued more as

<sup>77</sup> VC 6.8, l. 606.

<sup>78</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. by Cary Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); David C. Fowler, Charles F. Briggs, and Paul G. Remley, *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De regimine principum of Aegidius Romanus* (New York and London: Garland, 1997); Brunetto Latini, *The Book of the Treasure (Li Livres dou Trésor)*, trans. by Paul Barrette and Spurgeon Baldwin (New York and London: Garland, 1993). The version of *Secretum Secretorum* on which Gower relied is unknown; the text was, however, widely disseminated and available. According to the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (12.128), it is possible that it originated in a Greek version, since during the ninth century many Greek writings were being translated into Arabic. A complete edition of the Arabic *Sirr* is not available, but the text has been translated into a Modern English version. See A. S. Fulton, ed., *The Translation from the Arabic: The Secret of Secrets*, trans. by Ismail Ali in *Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi* V, ed. by Robert Steele (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), pp. 176–277. There are 600 manuscripts of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Latin translations of the *Sirr* (*Secretum*

a medical than an ethical treatise because of its scientific content (both occult and otherwise), its reputation as a book of privileged information passed from a great philosopher to a great king guaranteed that copies were prepared in the manner of a *speculum principum*.<sup>79</sup> For instance, Walter de Milemete presented a richly illustrated copy of the *Secretum Secretorum* to King Edward III. In the first chapter of the *Vox's speculum* Gower ensures that his readers note an allusion to the *Secretum*, Elizabeth Porter observes, by comparing the inferior education that Nectanabus offered the young Alexander to the wisdom conveyed in the conqueror's maturity by Aristotle.<sup>80</sup> While the *Secretum Secretorum* contains letters, it also presents itself as an extended letter, since it claims to have been sent to Alexander to substitute for the aging Aristotle's absence in the field. John of Seville's popular but incomplete translation of the *Secretum Secretorum* is in most manuscripts entitled the *Epistola Aristotelis ad Alexandrum de regimine sanitatis*, this title proclaiming the *Secretum's* epistolary genre.<sup>81</sup>

It is not known what version of the *Secretum* Gower read, but as M. A. Manzalaoui has shown, the book underwent additions and

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*Secretorum* or *Secreta Secretorum*), and these branched out to renderings in a wide variety of vernaculars. See C. B. Schmitt and D. Knox, comps., *Pseudo-Aristoteles Latinus*, p. 3 and the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* 8. 37–38 and 435. Among the thirteenth-century Latin manuscripts, MS Tanner 116, found in Oxford's Bodleian Library, contains commentary and glosses by Roger Bacon on the first complete Latin translation of the *Sirr* by Philip of Tripoli. For a print edition of MS Tanner 116, see Robert Steele, ed., *Secretum Secretorum cum glossis et notulis, Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi Fasc. V* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), pp. 1–175. For various Middle English versions, see M. A. Manzalaoui, ed., *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) and also Robert Steele, ed., *Three Prose Versions of the Secretum Secretorum*, EETS 74 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1898). Gower relied on the *Secretum Secretorum* not only for the *speculum* in VC 6, but also for Book 7 of the CA. See Gilbert, 'Notes on the Influence', pp. 84–93 and Porter, 'Gower's Ethical Microcosm', pp. 134–62. On the medieval transmission of the pseudo-Aristotelian text, see Steven J. Williams: *The Secret of Secrets: The Scholarly Career of a Pseudo-Aristotelian Text in the Latin Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003).

79 Williams, *The Secret of Secrets*, pp. 125–26, 256, 263–71. Williams notes that the split reception of the *Secretum Secretorum*, some valuing the text for scientific information, others for ethical instruction, can be seen in the two titles under which it circulated, 'Secretum Secretorum' speaking to the first audience and 'De regimine principum' to the second (p. 269). In Williams's assessment, the *Secretum* 'is not particularly hard to understand', so it did not take the privileged place in the thirteenth-century science curriculum that the *Physics* or *De anima* occupied (p. 191). On the *Secretum Secretorum's* popularity as a *speculum principum*, see Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 83–84, 120–21, and William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 49–50.

80 VC 6.8, ll. 631–6: *Doctor Alexandri Magni prauos sibi mores / Primitus edocuit, dum puer ipse fuit*. Porter, 'Gower's Ethical Microcosm', p. 139.

81 See Williams, *The Secret of Secrets*, p. 32.

reorganizations, and by the fourteenth century it was readily available in a Short Form and a Long Form, the latter representing a later construction that includes as prologue two additional letters between Alexander and Aristotle.<sup>82</sup> In the Long Form, Alexander first sends a message to Aristotle asking about the wisdom of executing certain Persian nobles, to which Aristotle replies that Alexander should show the clemency and benignity that would bind these worthy men to the realm. The text proper begins with an extended missive from Aristotle to Alexander that derives from an eighth-century Arabic collection of pseudo-Aristotelian letters and bears some resemblance to the *Nichomachian Ethics*.<sup>83</sup> As Steven J. Williams has shown, the popularity of the *Secretum Secretorum* among academics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries coincided with the circulation of new Aristotelian texts in the West, including an ever-amplifying collection of Aristotelian letters.<sup>84</sup> As the *Secretum* was edited or translated into a variety of languages, dedications and prologues cast as epistles were added to the front matter of the text. For instance, in what is likely the first complete Latin translation from the Arabic, in 1232 Philip of Tripoli addresses Guido, Bishop of Tripoli, in his epistolary prologue. Philip praises the bishop's learning and imitation of biblical virtues as represented in the great Hebrew fathers and expresses gratitude for the commission to translate a book of wisdom. Philip not only enables a wider reading of Arabic political lore (within twenty years, his translation was widely popular), but he also emphasizes the text's transmission from clerk to patron by including the dedication by Yahyā ibn al-Biṭrīq to Caliph al-Ma'mūn and the prefatory epistle of a previous translator, John of Seville, to Queen Tharasia.<sup>85</sup> Philip's complete translation comes to us in its earliest form in Roger Bacon's edition, which points out the epistolarity of this mirror

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82. Manzalaoui, Introduction, in *Secretum Secretorum*, p. xi. On various additions and subtractions to Philip of Tripoli's translation of the *Secretum Secretorum*, see Williams, *The Secret of Secrets*, pp. 142–47. Concerning material that was removed or restructured in Philip's translation, Stevens rebuts the conclusion of previous scholars of the *Secretum* that Pope Gregory IX's order to censor Aristotle's scientific work had an impact on the manuscripts of the *Secretum Secretorum* (pp. 147–81). Maria Wickert argues that Gower used a manuscript of the *Secretum* with a Christian inflection, although she does not suggest a manuscript to which the medieval poet might have had access. See Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, pp. 216–17, n. 69.

83. Manzalaoui, Introduction, in *Secretum Secretorum*, p. x. Williams, *The Secret of Secrets*, pp. 23–26.

84. Williams, *The Secret of Secrets*, pp. 183–297. See also Ingemar Düring, *Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition* (Göteborg: Almqvist och Wiksell, 1957), pp. 88–89. For an edition of the Aristotelian letters, see Marian Plezia, ed., *Aristotelis privatorum scriptorum fragmenta* (Leipzig: Tuebner, 1977).

85. Manzalaoui, Introduction, in *Secretum Secretorum*, p. xix.

for princes in its glosses.<sup>86</sup> Philip's work to preserve and transmit by letter, whether encountered in a Latin edition such as Bacon's or a vernacular translation, would have appealed to the sensibilities of the poet who opens the Prologue to the *Visio Anglie* with an encomium to old writings and later begins the Prologue to the *Confessio Amantis* invoking those who 'written ous tofore'.<sup>87</sup>

In this cycle of epistolary transmission, the secret of secrets is wisdom. As was discussed in Chapter One, the great mystery is emblemized in a magical ruby ring protecting the ruler's life and power. If this ring cannot be obtained, the ruler's virtue and the text that teaches virtue — the *Secretum Secretorum* — substitutes for the ring.<sup>88</sup> For Gower, providing a similar verbal charm — a wisdom text capable of motivating a young king in apocalyptic times — was the rhetorical aim of the entire *Vox Clamantis* and the special project of the *Epistola*. In language reminiscent of magical incantations, Gower will passionately call out to the king, repeat proverbs, and enjoin him with imperatives, all speech acts to summon a great and mature ruler into being. Underscoring the *Epistola*'s high purpose, Gower emphasizes Richard's tender, teachable youth and the monarch's promise to be better prepared than Alexander, as sagacious as Solomon, and as regal as his deceased father. Should Richard attend to this epistle, whose advice is supported by the greatest classical and biblical authority, the young ruler's position would be secure, his policies efficacious, and his fame endless.

Both the requirement of a teachable audience and the traditional expectation that *speculum principum* be read by noble youth prompt Gower to depict Richard in this epistle as a young man. This was the reality when Gower first wrote the *Epistola ad regem* but a convenient fiction through the various stages of the poem's inclusion in the *Vox Clamantis* and revision.<sup>89</sup> One way in which Gower emphasizes Richard's adolescence is through comparison to Alexander the Great's boyhood and eventual achievements. In the epistle's brief salutation, the narrator lauds a fledgling Richard for being 'pious' and 'good' and for 'excel[ling] others' among whom Alexander is included.<sup>90</sup> With the *Epistola ad regem*, Gower argues,

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86 Steele, ed., *Secretum Secretorum*, pp. 1–175. Bacon's emphasis on epistolarity can be seen, for instance, in a marginal note (p. 38) on Aristotle and Alexander's initial letter-exchange in the text: *Multas epistolas composuit Aristotiles* (Aristotle wrote many letters). Bacon was, however, most interested in the scientific aspects of the *Secretum*. Bacon's edition and glosses to the *Secretum* are aimed to defend its content against attacks on its presentation of occult sciences. See Williams, *The Secret of Secrets*, p. 282.

87 CA, Pro. 1–11.

88 Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, pp. 42–43.

89 The ten-year-old Richard II was crowned in 1377; the first version of VC 6. 8–18 was composed between 1377 and 1381.

90 VC 6.8, ll. 589, 627, 605.

Richard has an earlier opportunity than did an adolescent Alexander to be well-educated in both knowledge and morality, and thus, Richard will achieve greater heights:

Alexander's teacher [Nectanabus] truly taught him depraved  
 Customs, at first when he was just a lad.  
 The boy king learned and later [under Aristotle], when he tried to give  
 It up, his early practice hindered him.  
 Babylon and Darius to Alexander fell,  
 But not the evil imprint on his heart.<sup>91</sup>

As Gower implies, Richard's eventual superiority to Alexander depends on an early imprint of the *speculum's* teachings, and, as the narrator comments elsewhere, on the medieval king's ability to harness military power and to achieve a sophisticated understanding of statecraft as both Alexander and Richard's father had.

Although the adolescent Alexander did not have the same advantages as Richard, nevertheless, the Macedonian conqueror still sets several aspirations which Gower's epistle contends Richard will surpass. Alexander, for instance, is more glorious. While Gower employs respectful and complimentary epithets for Richard, he does not use the grandiloquent language of Pseudo-Aristotle's prefatory missive to Alexander in the *Secretum Secretorum* because Richard, still a boy, has not yet reached Alexander's heights. The Philosopher opens with 'O Fili gloriosissime, imperator justissime', an invocation to the unconquerable ruler that Alexander has already become, whereas Gower, bearing harder on his addressee's youth, must emphasize Richard's potential more than current capacities.<sup>92</sup> Gower does describe Richard as 'magnificent', but this adjective functions more as a sign of what Richard could become. Neither does Gower's direct address to Richard compliment the king for the advanced understanding that allows Aristotle to convey the secret of secrets to Alexander in coded language.<sup>93</sup> Gower's expression, in contrast, is not opaque, but straightforward — in keeping with both the requirement of educating an inexperienced young monarch and Gower's ideals of frank elocution.

In addition to emphasizing Richard's adolescence in mostly laudatory comparisons to Alexander, Gower indulges an impassioned address to Richard in his youth, marked by repeated apostrophes and urgent injunctions:

91 VC 6.8, ll. 631–36. The Latin original states: *Doctor Alexandri Magni prauos sibi mores / Primitus edocuit, dum puer ipse fuit: / Rex puer hec didicit que post dum dedidicisse / Temptauit, primus obstat abusus ei: / Vicit Alexander Darium simul et Babilonem / Sed nequit impressum vincere corde malum.*

92 Steele, ed., *Secretum Secretorum*, p. 40.

93 Steele, ed., *Secretum Secretorum*, p. 40.

O young in years, in whom is found no subtlety,  
 O simply noble, faithless spears beware.  
 Your youth denies that you are fit for subtlety,  
 Nor does it wish that you should fail your birth.  
 Beauty you have, birth, rank, honour, power and charm;  
 Your birth conferred these generous gifts on you.  
 May likewise tend you virtue, fame, and manners' grace;  
 Thus live in God a full man, pious king.<sup>94</sup>

With fervent apostrophes that show Gower's preference for repetition to hammer a good point home, the narrator opens this passage by equating Richard's minority with innocence and a lack of 'subtlety' that contrasts with the machinations of evil men at court. Gower describes these evil men in Chapter 9, proceeds to recommendations for good behaviour (including conduct in church and in relationship with the law) in 10, and finally, offers a lesson on pride in Chapter 11 that introduces the passage above. In this structure, the ardent address occurs after many important aspects of personal and public governance have been laid out in the epistle; it characterizes Richard as a young king whose extraordinary qualities should allow him to master them all.

With so many gifts from God — and the additional gift of this epistle — Richard might seek the wisdom of Solomon and establish himself as a famous exemplar in ensuing mirrors for princes. Though now a youth, Richard will thus become a 'full man' and achieve his desire of equalling Charles V, whom Phillipe de Mézières had called 'le sage Salemon'.<sup>95</sup> Gower offers the biblical king Solomon as a Judeo-Christian exemplar of the wise man whom Richard can be, a counterpart to Aristotle, and foil to corrupt teachers such as Nectanabus:

O good young king, regard what to young Solomon  
 Occurred, whence be you mindful of yourself.  
 A lad of twelve, he got to see God in the night  
 Since he had offered sacred gifts to Him.<sup>96</sup>

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94 VC 6.11, ll. 845–52. The Latin original states: *O tener annorum, dolus inquo nullus habetur, / Simplex nobilitas, perfida tela caue: / Etas namque doli non te sinit esse capacem, / Non te vultque tuum degenerare genus. / Sunt tibi forma, genus, honor, ordo, decus que potestas; / Contulit hec ortus libera dona tuus: / Teque sequantur ita laus, virtus, gracia morum, / Et sic, plenus homo, rex pie, viue deo.*

95 Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 357.

96 VC, 6.15, ll. 1039–42. The Latin original states: *O pie rex iuuenis, iuuenili quid Salomone / Contigit intende, sis memor vnde tui: / Hic bis sex puer annorum cum sacra dedisset / Dona deo, meruit nocte videre deum.* In CA 7, Gower also holds up Solomon as the great king who has 'wisdom at his axinges, / Which stant above alle othere thinges' (ll. 3911–12).



In these lines and those immediately following in Gower's letter to Richard, the poet entreats his monarch to imitate Solomon and ask God for the holy gift of sapience. As the *Epistola ad regem* provides motivation for this regal prayer, it both defines and explains the process for achieving the secret of secrets.

In order to reflect the wisdom of Solomon and the authority of Aristotle, Gower mines his *speculum* with proverbs, jewels of moral phrasing that lead to the secret of secrets and set the narrator's voice (a conglomeration of the narrator's moral advice, Solomon's sagacity, and Aristotle's authority) as a substitute for the potent ruby. As Betsy Bowden remarks, 'In every culture so far discovered by anthropologists and/or documented by historians, worldwide across four millennia, the wisdom of the ages is conveyed in succinct, easy-to-memorize units [...] proverbs [providing] points of entry, for language learners simultaneously absorb idiomatic usage.'<sup>97</sup> Through aphorisms, Gower underscores the youth of his royal audience and offers scriptural or cultural 'points of entry' for young Richard on every topic of advice in the *speculum*: 'The pot is wont to hold what filled it first' on Richard's need to be tutored well in his youth; a warning against the 'avaricious man' with 'honey in his mouth, but venom in his heart'; an encouragement to deploy military might to protect the people in 'A sword that is at rest cannot restrain the world'; a caution to treat the under classes well under the law in 'Since small flies bite, be provident in small affairs'; a proof of the benefit of almsgiving in 'A few seeds scattered now and you'll reap much'; a description of the king's relationship to the people and the land in 'The people are the king's own field, the tiller he; / Tilling badly he gets thorns, but well, grain'; an encomium on regal astuteness in 'The years will pass away, but wisdom always stays; / No house will fall that stands upon this rock,' and many other common expressions.<sup>98</sup> In these maxims and more, Gower anchors the *Epistola's* advice in the wisdom of the ages, its endless repetitions constituting a charm that could lead Richard II to the secret of secrets.

By deploying well-known *sententiae*, Gower recalls John the Baptist's proverbial expressions on preparing the way for the Lord and laying an axe at the root of corrupt trees, though he replaces the Forerunner's sharp corrections with general advice for a young devotee who has not yet sinned. Gower also links the narrator's good sense to widespread agreement about

97 Betsy Bowden, 'Gower and ... Pilgrimage? Pamphilus? Proverbs? Some Promising Preguntas Raised but Far from Answered at Valladolid', *The John Gower Newsletter*, 33.2 (October 2014), pp. 8–9.

98 VC 6.8, l. 638; 6.9, l. 657; 6.9, l. 711; 6.11, l. 791; 6.11, l. 814; 6.14, ll. 1001–02; 6.15, ll. 1055–56.

the monarch's roles and the metaphors for describing them.<sup>99</sup> Reinscribing such proverbial language, the speaker of the epistle emerges not only as a prudent adviser who should be consulted, but also, according to Judith Ferster, as a persona with a 'mixture of submission, aggression, flattery and resistance', since aphorisms allow the narrator to launch criticisms while still retaining a respectful posture.<sup>100</sup> Safe modes of expression that offer protection to an oft-bold Johannine speaker, Gower's sayings are akin to the veiled language that Aristotle claims to use with Alexander in the *Secretum Secretorum*, though the proverbs rely on well-known metaphors, while veiled language depends upon the reader to illuminate obscurities. Both kinds of expressions reveal truths while glossing over specific points: Gower is careful, in other words, to unleash frank criticism against estates rather than specific people, against threats surrounding the monarch rather than the king himself. Gower's axioms, for example, avoid identifying avaricious men in the realm, times when Richard failed to protect the people by the sword, and other contemporary issues.<sup>101</sup> To close the loop on educating the monarch through the letter's advice, the narrator enjoins Richard to speak in the proverbial language of the *speculum*: '[Let y]our discourse be credible, discreet your words.'<sup>102</sup> Indeed, Richard showed interest in being an axiomatic speaker, having ordered an epitaph for his own tomb extolling his 'prudence', 'reason', and 'truthfulness of speech.'<sup>103</sup> Should the monarch agree to refashion his image according to Gower's familiar advice, the broad application of these expressions gives him much licence in choosing his own means for refashioning.

Regardless of constant resort to general aphorisms from the *Secretum Secretorum* and elsewhere, as Ferster also points out, advice literature such as Gower's managed to be topical and pertinent.<sup>104</sup> This move from maxim to current events encourages the *Epistola*'s audience to place the ring of wisdom on his finger and then enter public spaces where regal sagacity might be projected. The most evident way in which Gower's letter to Richard moves from truism to contemporary events is in its treatment of

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99 The title of A. J. Minnis's well-known article, 'John Gower: *Sapiens* in Ethics and Politics', expresses the poet's goals for his narrative voice in this epistle. See A. J. Minnis, 'John Gower: *Sapiens* in Ethics and Politics', *Medium Aevum*, 49 (1980), 207–29. Minnis's article focuses on the CA, and as David Aers points out, is part of a series of studies that surfaced in the 1980s and 1990s that emphasized the coherence of Gower's ethics. See David Aers, 'Reflections on Gower as *Sapiens* in Ethics and Politics', in *Re-visioning Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998), pp. 185–202.

100 Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, p. 1.

101 Manzalaoui, ed., *Secretum Secretorum*, p. 40. In this Middle English text, Aristotle explains that he writes, at times, 'courtly'.

102 VC 6.11, l. 797.

103 Saul, *Richard II*, p. 353.

104 Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, p. 4.

the Black Prince, 'whose watchful fame resounds yet everywhere.'<sup>105</sup> '[T]o his praise and yours I turn my work', the narrator explains to Richard, 'so that / Your father's honour will abide with you.'<sup>106</sup> According to Gower's epistle, Edward's honour consisted in justice, honesty, good judgement in councillors, generosity, military prowess in foreign countries, and peace-keeping at home. As Paul Beichner has shown, this laudatory characterization of Edward is composed with a patchwork of lines from Peter Riga's *Aurora* that depict Judas Maccabeus, Saul as warrior, King David, and others in Gower's attempt to burnish the prince's image with biblical fame.<sup>107</sup> Although David Aers has pointed out the jingoism in Gower's sanctioning of blood lust abroad while hoping for law and order in England, Gower's main point was to spur Richard on in forming a stronger foreign policy, with Edward's opposition to the French as a guide.<sup>108</sup> While Gower's instructions for Richard in law and righteousness inhere in proverbs that might be applied in a variety of ways, the poet's reflections on the late Edward's deeds link proverbs to past events and equate the Black Prince with a variety of animals whose significance is well known, developed in the elementary studies of Aesop, bestiaries, and family crests. In other words, while proverbs unmoored from specific political contexts supply flexible instruction for future use by a young Richard, the adages summarizing the Black Prince's great deeds and the predetermined animal images painting an iconography of them pin Edward's previous accomplishments to the *speculum* tradition. For instance, when Gower claims that Edward chose the best councillors so that '[n]o nettles [might] contaminate the rose' or compares the Black Prince to a lion in bravery or a boar in ferocity, he assigns common phrases and images to exemplary conduct, includes an English prince in the secret of secrets, and transmits this expanding lore by epistle to the next king.<sup>109</sup> *Vox* 6.13 on the Black Prince features Gower's topical addition to advice such as that included in the *Secretum Secretorum*.

Assuming Richard's eagerness to have Edward's merits abide in himself and the teaching effectiveness of the epistle's encomium on the Black Prince, the *speculum* proceeds to compare Richard, as it had his father, to a regal creature. The narrator argues that the young king should aspire to the realms of the 'eagle [that] seeking heights flies over all winged life / And represents the king who's pure in heart':<sup>110</sup>

105 VC 6.13, l. 920: *Cuius adhuc vigilans laus vbicumque sonat*.

106 VC 6.13, ll. 923–24: *Inque suam laudem que tuam mea scripta reuoluo, / Vt probitate memor sit tibi patris honor*.

107 Peter Beichner, 'Gower's Use of *Aurora* in *Vox Clamantis*', *Speculum*, 30.4 (1955), 584.

108 Aers, 'Gower as *Sapiens* in Ethics and Politics', p. 190.

109 VC 6.13, ll. 926, 940, 951, 960.

110 VC 6.14, ll. 985–86: *Alta petens aquila volat alite celsius omni, / Et regem mundum corde figurat ea*. In addition to employing common avian symbols, this passage is preceded by a reworking of PN 304–15, in which Gower advises Richard to put on a happy countenance

Better therefore is it the eagle's form to take  
 And rule a quiet realm with pious love  
 Than terrorize the folk by griffin's fearful show,  
 For always love transcends all fearsome deeds.<sup>111</sup>

If, in imitation of his father, Richard II claims the most majestic among animals and avians as his standards, he will align himself with the best principles of leadership in creation and return the kingdom to a place where 'love transcends'. This can happen only if power and law are not employed, griffin-like, against the people. When the king spreads his protective wings over the land, peace overcomes tyranny and sponsors the holy English union hoped for by the narrator at the beginning of this *speculum*, a union where 'each liege from faithful heart should love / [The king] in the disposition of his mind'.<sup>112</sup> Encouraging Richard to emulate his father, the *Epistola*'s animal imagery works much like the proverbs to re-inscribe ancient meanings, reinforce them in the monarch's memory, and move his will toward better models of kingship.

By situating himself as a latter-day Aristotle, incorporating Christian values into classical advice, articulating proverbial wisdom, and recognizing English models of good rule from the recent past, the narrator of the *Epistola ad regem* earns the authority to mete out advice in imperatives. As Gower claims later in the *Confessio Amantis*'s 'Rethorique' lecture, words (emanating from the divine Word) can establish or reverse any situation, and Gower maximizes language's influence through speech acts. He might temper his verbal commands to Richard with suggestions in the subjunctive and expressions in which the narrator prays that the king might follow advice; nevertheless, imperative verb forms occur frequently in imitation of Aristotle's instructions to Alexander in the *Secretum Secretorum*. Indeed, the opening stanza commands the king to 'hear' (*audi*) the message of this mirror, an injunction invoking the cry of a messenger who delivers a letter to be read.<sup>113</sup> Calling attention to the verbal commands, Gower alliterates them in such exhortations as 'pelle' ('reject vicious men') and 'plaude'

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in the face of fear, to astound all enemies and give comfort to friends with a face of calm, even if this must be a show. In this way, Gower uses the PN's instructions on apostrophe and its example of reassuring advice for a frightened man to address Richard directly about the need to take courage. As Vinsaaf provides instruction on amplifying on apostrophe, Gower provides instruction in the son's amplifying on the father's bravery. Masayoshi Itô ('Gower's Knowledge of *Poetria Nova*', *Studies in English Literature*, 162 [1975], 7–11) offers VC 6.14, ll. 979–84 as his most important proof that Gower knew the PN. See the discussion below in n. 165.

<sup>111</sup> VC 6.14, ll. 993–96.

<sup>112</sup> VC 6.8, ll. 583–84.

<sup>113</sup> VC 6.8, l. 589.

(‘applaud the good’).<sup>114</sup> He does not hesitate to double imperatives, for instance in his instructions to ‘Give your things away; don’t spare!’ (*Da tua non parce*).<sup>115</sup> In Chapter 10 of the epistolary *speculum*, a summation of the qualities inherent in a good ruler, imperatives cluster in the concluding stanza, enjoining Richard to manifest a summa of nobility:

Believe a good name riches will surpass, *preserve*  
 Honour, *remove* scandal, in glory *thrive*.  
*Disturb* a lovely bloom, it gives a fresh scent off,  
 A good man’s virtue everywhere smells sweet.  
*Consult* the doctors of the law, *depart* the halls  
 Of wicked men, *encounter* with the good,  
 So that you gather doctrine from educated minds  
 Like harvest grain and fountain water pure.<sup>116</sup>

Interestingly, one of the imperative verb forms — ‘[d]isturb’ ([t]ange) — opens a proverbial statement on the sweet smell of virtue. This common expression shows that although imperatives in their directness might seem antithetical to the malleable advice in proverbs or the laudatory comparison with royal creatures, they are nevertheless interlinked to the narrator’s beneficent authority, grounded in Aristotelian injunctions, scripture, and widespread agreements among medieval English people. The *speculum*’s epistolary form enables imperatives since it shields the monarch from submitting to the presence of a commanding adviser and allows the king time to consider a response.

Gower’s control of speech acts in the epistle is all the more persuasive because of the narrator’s implied superiority to that of other counsellors who are censured as ‘false friends,’ fear mongers, and ‘avaricious’ men.<sup>117</sup> By grounding his advice in Aristotelian counsel tinged with Judeo-Christian morality, Gower’s narrator rises above the corrupted insinuations of others and, as Ferster notes, softens the impression of criticizing the king by criticizing those prominent in the court.<sup>118</sup> Just as the epistolary form implies a protective distance between a formidable counsellor and his royal advisee, condemnation of corrupt advisers somewhat detaches criticisms of the government from the ruler himself and lays them

<sup>114</sup> VC 6.8, ll. 639–41.

<sup>115</sup> VC 6. 11, l. 815. Here, I have supplied my own translation rather than Meindl’s.

<sup>116</sup> VC 6.10, ll. 781–88. Emphasis mine. The Latin original states: *Nomen, crede, bonum gasas precellit, honorem / Conseruat, remouet scandala, laude viget: / Tange bonum florum, dulce prestabit odorem, / Sic virtusque viri fragrat vbique boni. / Consule doctores legis, discede malorum / A conuenticulis, concomitare bonos: / Vt granum de messe tibi, de fonte salubri / Pocula de docto dogmata mente legas.*

<sup>117</sup> VC 6.9, ll. 643, 647–48, 655.

<sup>118</sup> Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, p. 4.

instead at the feet of those ostensibly trying to corrupt the king. While the epistle's narrator speaks in the first person and addresses Richard in the second, the false counsellors make up a group of evil outsiders described in the third. The intimacy constructed between this Aristotelian 'John' and Richard in the epistle, even with class distinction and physical separation, reflects the providential unity the poet hopes will reign in England — even in apocalyptic times — though the false counsellors seek to undermine it. By merging his intentions and teachings with those of God at the conclusion of the epistle's first version, the narrator transcends base councils at court and cements the ethos of a Christian Aristotle, divinely sanctioned to convey the wisdom of ages to a new king and beyond:

To your rule's glory wrote these meters I, O king,  
 Eager servant of the realm, to your praise.  
 Accept, O pious king, these written gifts of God  
 I humble in heart have made in your praise.  
 This doctrine is not mine but His Who teaches and  
 Alone makes men with His words teachable.<sup>119</sup>

In his humility, the narrator distinguishes himself from proud and grasping counsellors and assumes that such a pious king would want to reject their falsehoods. Composing words from the Teacher, the narrator offers verses to render the king teachable, not by the persuasions of the disloyal, manipulative, and greedy, but by the advice that serves both divine and human law.<sup>120</sup>

Seeing his promising, youthful portrayal in the *Epistola ad regem*, the adolescent king might have gloried in Gower's depiction of the realm's bright future. It is difficult to imagine, however, how Richard might have regarded this epistolary *speculum* as he matured and Gower exchanged

119 VC 6.18A, ll. 1191–96: *Ad decus imperii, Rex, esta tui metra scripsi / Seruus ergo Regni promptus honore tibi. / Hec tibi que, pie Rex, humili de corde parauī, / Scripta tue laudi suscipe dona dei: / Non est ista mea tantum doctrina, sed eius / Qui docet, et dociles solus ab ore creat. / O iuuenile decus, laus Regia, flos puerorum, / Vt valor est in te, sic tibi dico vale.*

120 Both Maria Wickert and Conrad Van Dijk have commented on the ways that Gower's *speculum* in the VC concentrates on the king's relationship to the law and the practices enabling justice. See Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, pp. 133–41; Conrad Van Dijk, *John Gower and the Limits of the Law* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 101–24. In Robert J. Meindl's summation, the whole of the VC's Book 6 'is a comprehensive survey of the justice system in England'. See Robert J. Meindl, 'Semper Venalis: Gower's Avaricious Lawyers', *Accessus*, 1.2 (Summer 2014), 3 <<http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=accessus>>. See also, Robert J. Meindl, 'Gower's *Speculum Iudicis*: Judicial Corruption in Book VI of the *Vox Clamantis*', in *John Gower: Others and the Self*, ed. by Russell A. Peck and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 260–82.

laudatory lines in the concluding chapter for criticisms.<sup>121</sup> Although Gower maintained the characterization of a youthful, biddable Richard throughout *Vox* 6. 8–18A, the early version of the *speculum* excuses Richard in his naïveté, while the later version makes him responsible for the ‘kingdom’s crimes.’<sup>122</sup> Gower’s pattern of revisions seems to confirm Staley’s theory that poems composed in the earlier part of the Ricardian reign were more likely to assume the king’s participation in fashioning a royal persona, while those composed in the latter do not presuppose the author’s amicable engagement with the sovereign.<sup>123</sup> While the first version of the *speculum* concludes with a glowing adieu to a king evincing ‘youthful virtue [and] royal honour’, the revised conclusion warns the king to avoid rigidity in dealing with rebellions and to ‘return in Christ to God.’<sup>124</sup> Although Gower offers more corrections and fewer compliments in the revised conclusion to the *speculum*, the focus remains on a young king who has much to learn from an epistolary mirror. In the letter form a loving adviser continues to speak personally to the monarch whenever his majesty might choose to see his reflection in Gower’s book and project a wise and righteous image to the people.

Whether or not the addressee of *Vox* 6. 8–18 was always amenable to the instruction there, a mirror for princes speaks also to a wide audience interested in public and personal governance and perhaps fascinated to overhear the advice such as that given by Aristotle to Alexander, Gower to Richard II. From the beginning of his *speculum*, Gower acknowledges this wider readership in glosses that summarize the content of each chapter and refer to the author and the king in the third person, as those engaged in a conversation that others might observe. The vacillation in pronoun use — with Gower referring to himself in the first person and addressing Richard in the second throughout the letter and then referring to both himself and Richard in the third person in the glosses — gestures toward different points of view and scenes for reading. Just as the epistolary form binds the letter-writer and addressee, so the glosses tie the people who read this letter to the education offered the king. Richard is obligated to receive this education both for the good of his soul and for these subjects, and these subjects might internalize this education for the better rule of their own professional and domestic circumstances. The epistolary *speculum*,

121 See Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, p. 111. If Gower revised the passages discussed in the VC in the 1390s, Richard, in his majority, may also have been irritated that Gower continued to characterize him as a youth. An official acknowledgment of Richard’s majority did not occur until he was 22, and the delay must have caused much exasperation to the young king, as well as a variety of legal issues. See S. B. Chrimes, ‘Richard II’s Questions to the Judges, 1387’, *Law Quarterly Review*, 72 (1956), 365–90.

122 VC 6.18B, l. 1185: *crimina regni*.

123 Staley, *Business of Making Culture*, p. 69.

124 VC 6.18A, l. 1197; VC 6.18B ll. 1197–98, 1190.

with its purpose to teach a king who (at least in the *Vox*'s presentation) remains ever young and teachable, has the power to convey classical traditions on governance, meld them to a Judeo-Christian society, tie the monarch to his best adviser and to his people, and perpetuate the cycle of wisdom passed on through many ages. Like Pseudo-Aristotle's advice to Alexander, Gower's epistolary *speculum* unites writer, reader (king), and Latinate public in one world through the direct address and imagined readings of readings.<sup>125</sup> As we will see in this book's next chapter, Gower continued to extend the readership of this *speculum* when he redeployed the complimentary conclusion in *Vox* 6.18A for a coronation poem for Henry IV.

### Dedicatory Epistles<sup>126</sup>

With Gower's use of *Heroides* XI for 'The Tale of Canace and Machaire' and of the *Secretum Secretorum* for the *Epistola ad regem*, we have seen the poet experimenting with sources and recontextualizations for epistolary rhetoric. While he shortens Canace's letter and plants it amidst her tale to convey a powerful female voice and while he maintains the letter format throughout his *speculum principum* for a personalized and perpetual transmission of knowledge suited to a king, the Dedicatory Epistle to Thomas Arundel that this chapter section will now broach imitates the *Poetria Nova*'s epistolary Dedication to Innocent III to compliment and offer a curative to an archbishop.<sup>127</sup> Like Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his epistolary preface to an august church figure, Gower puns on the dedicatee's name, emphasizes light imagery, and amplifies on the aged youth topos, all the while writing within the constraints of presentation discourse and dictaminal rhetoric taught in the *Poetria Nova*. Just as Gower played Aristotle to Richard II's Alexander in the *Epistola ad regem*, in the Dedicatory Epistle the fourteenth-century poet is the great rhetoric master, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, to Arundel's Innocent in order to earn the archbishop's attention and the passage of an undetermined text, meant to purge spiritual wounds, into

<sup>125</sup> Altman, *Epistolarity*, p. 88.

<sup>126</sup> With the title 'Dedicatory Epistle' (hereafter DE in the notes), I am using Eric W. Stockton's title for the text under investigation, Gower's letter to Archbishop Arundel. See Eric W. Stockton, trans., *The Major Latin Works of John Gower* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), p. 47. The title 'Dedicatory Epistle', rather than merely 'Epistola' as used by Macaulay (G. C. Macaulay, ed., 'Epistola', in *The Complete Works of John Gower*, 4, pp. lxxvix–x), expresses the main content and focus of the letter, while distinguishing it from other kinds of prologues and prefatory material.

<sup>127</sup> Martin Camargo, ed., Margaret F. Nims, trans., *Geoffrey of Vinsauf: Poetria Nova*, rev. ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2010). Hereafter, PN in the notes. All translations from the PN are from Nims, unless otherwise noted.



the highest echelons of power. In contrast, however, to Geoffrey's praises for Innocent's eloquence — 'Silence, Augustine! Pope Leo, be still! Cease, John! Gregory, stay your speech [...] [for] another may be golden tongued and brilliant in discourse, yet his speech is inferior to yours [...]' — <sup>128</sup> in a deviation from the *Poetria Nova* that says as much as the imitation, Gower's Dedicatory Epistle reserves eloquence for the author himself.

The Dedicatory Epistle to Archbishop Arundel is now placed at the head of Oxford, All Souls College, MS 98 — the manuscript that Macaulay used for his edition of the *Vox Clamantis* — and gives the whole the appearance of a presentation copy.<sup>129</sup> However, the Dedicatory Epistle was not always so placed, and neither is All Souls College, MS 98 a presentation copy. Revealing the presence of four independent scribes and potential references to Gower's death in the manuscript, Malcolm Parkes demonstrates that All Souls, MS 98 was cobbled together after 1408, probably for one of Gower's sympathizers or associates.<sup>130</sup> Based on Parkes's evidence and on a close reading of the Dedicatory Epistle, its emendations, and historical contexts, R. F. Yeager suggests that the letter was written as a preface to *Viciorum pestilencia* for Archbishop Arundel at two different junctures: upon the prelate's elevation to the See of Canterbury and again upon his return from exile and promulgation of the *De heretico comburendo* and *Constitutiones*.<sup>131</sup> Yeager reasons that having sharply criticized the church, Gower sought in this second instance to clarify his loyalties and gain the archbishop's protection.<sup>132</sup> Although we might never know its original context, placement, and purpose, the Dedicatory Epistle to Arundel offers an important witness to Gower's combination of what Dhira B. Mahoney terms 'liminal discourse' (prefatory material that frames a text) with epistolary forms.<sup>133</sup> Both on the margins and like marginalia in framing the audience's reception of a text, dedications such as Gower's, according to Mahoney, often speak from fringe positions to sway

<sup>128</sup> PN, Dedication, ll. 6–19.

<sup>129</sup> G. C. Macaulay, ed. *The Complete Works of John Gower*, 4, p. lxi. According to David R. Carlson ('Gower on Henry IV's Rule: The Endings of the *Cronica Tripertita* and its Texts', *Traditio*, 62 [2007], 207–36 [231, n. 30]), 'Macaulay's decision to favor [All Souls College, MS 98] as he did for establishing the text for his edition was a mistake.'

<sup>130</sup> Malcolm Parkes, 'Patterns of Scribal Activity and Revisions of the Text in Early Copies of Works by John Gower', in *New Science out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, ed. by Richard Beadle and A. J. Piper (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), pp. 81–121.

<sup>131</sup> R. F. Yeager, 'Gower's "Epistle to Archbishop Arundel": The Evidence of Oxford, All Souls College, MS 98', in *Manuscript and Print in Late Medieval and Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Professor Julia Boffey*, ed. by Tamara Atkin and Jaclyn Rajsic (Cambridge: Brewer, 2019), pp. 13–34.

<sup>132</sup> Yeager, 'Epistle to Archbishop Arundel', pp. 31–32.

<sup>133</sup> Dhira B. Mahoney, 'Gower's Two Prologues to *Confessio Amantis*' in *Re-Visioning Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998), p. 35.

the most influential readers. Gower, wearing the mantle of Geoffrey of Vinsauf, emerges confidently from this fringe, though his familiarity with the addressee is tempered by reverence.

To summarize its contents, the Dedicatory Epistle to Arundel is preceded by a gloss emphasizing the dedication's status as a letter: 'Hanc Epistolam subscriptam corde deuoto misit senex et cecus Iohannes Gower Reuerendissimo in Cristo Patri ac domino suo precipuo, domino Thome de Arundell [...]' (With a devoted heart, old and blind John Gower sent the epistle below to the most Reverend Father in Christ and his own distinguished lord, Lord Thomas of Arundel).<sup>134</sup> This gloss paints a close spiritual relationship between the aging poet and the great archbishop, a person of such stature as to inspire great interest in readers. Because of Arundel's position, the Dedicatory Epistle functions as a kind of advertisement for the poet's moral advice, appropriate as it proves for both kings and prelates. Gower opens the Dedicatory Epistle by complimenting the Archbishop of Canterbury on being an heir worthy of Thomas Becket and by pointing out that the shared first name 'Thomas' underscores that exalted lineage. Gower then offers his lord a book concerning matters that must be 'bewailed' ('plangendum') at 'this sad time' ('isto tempore tristi').<sup>135</sup> If Yeager is correct (and the dedication was originally intended for the *Viciorum pestilencia*), the matters to be bemoaned are the sores of corruption in both individual and community, and the sad time marks an apex of human sin, including vice among the people, the Lollards, and the Curia. In humility, the poet entreats Arundel to retain the codex's contents in the memory so that they might be sources of contemplation, stimulation, and mourning.<sup>136</sup> Although Arundel is a great light capable of healing social and ecclesiastical ills, the poet suggests that reading the following text will increase the archbishop's bright glory.<sup>137</sup> In need of healing himself, the poet describes how age and blindness could not curb his determination to write 'tales of the world' for the archbishop's study.<sup>138</sup> The poet feels especially obliged to do so because he regards Arundel as a father and hopes that as a result of his labour the archbishop will offer him 'special grace', some relief from the torments of sightlessness and pain by means of his 'father's' spiritual acceptance.<sup>139</sup> Gower concludes with compliments on the archbishop's manliness, illumination, and righteousness. While Arundel spreads his light across England, Gower hopes that love

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<sup>134</sup> All translations of the DE are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>135</sup> DE, ll. 7–8.

<sup>136</sup> DE, ll. 3–4 and 8.

<sup>137</sup> DE, ll. 9–16.

<sup>138</sup> DE, l. 22: *mundi gesta*.

<sup>139</sup> DE, l. 26: *tua gracias sit specialis*.

will uproot enmity and that love's ecclesiastical source will eventually find his soul in heaven's radiance.

Readers familiar with dictaminal treatises will recognize the basic structure for medieval professional letters in my summary of the Dedicatory Epistle, another way in which Gower associates the document with the *Poetria Nova*. Gower's letter to Arundel begins by hailing the archbishop by his first name (*salutatio*) and capturing his interest with a reference to the schism, a serious problem, while securing his benevolence with effusive praise (*exordium*). The missive goes on to reveal Gower's motives for writing (*narratio*), as well as the poet's hope of the archbishop's protection and support (*petitio*). The *conclusio* looks forward to a brighter England under Arundel's care and offers a second petition (this time to God) that the archbishop will receive eternal life. An impersonation of Geoffrey of Vinsauf in the Dedicatory Epistle depends upon expert presentation of this epistolary format.

Though the *Poetria Nova* does not contain overt training in *dictamen*, Marjorie Curry Woods has documented the ways in which it was taught as a handbook for letters.<sup>140</sup> According to Woods, the epistolary dedication to Pope Innocent III that opens the *Poetria Nova* established Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *ars poetriae* as a dictaminal teaching tool. In this dedication, Geoffrey salutes the 'Holy Father', charms him with playful verses concerning the meter of the pope's name, rehearses his 'illustrious lineage', praises his eloquence and youthfulness, refers to his grace and generosity, and declares him the great light that has drawn Geoffrey to offer 'this little work, brief in form, vast in power.'<sup>141</sup> We can see the five-part dictaminal structure, noted already in Gower's imitative Dedicatory Epistle, in Geoffrey's missive to Innocent. The *salutatio* naming the pope and his lineage, as Douglas Kelly notes, inscribes a neoplatonic 'hierarchy of authority' that serves both to place poetry in the larger plan of creation and clarify the relationship between author and addressee.<sup>142</sup> The *salutatio* gives way to an *exordium* lauding the pope's eloquence and understanding that Geoffrey would like to imitate. A *narratio* on the greatness of Rome and Geoffrey's travels there compare Innocent to a welcome port, the destination for the treatise.<sup>143</sup> The *narratio* sets the scene for the *petitio* that the pope notice and reward the dedicated text. The *conclusio* completes these discursive gestures with an allusion to the great potential of the *Poetria Nova*'s teachings; Geoffrey submits that the slim volume is a compliment worthy of the pope. Not only did Geoffrey's epistolary dedication to Innocent provide a model

140 Marjorie Curry Woods, *Classroom Commentaries: Teaching the Poetria nova across Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2010).

141 PN, ll. 1, 10, 42–43.

142 Douglas Kelly, *The Arts of Poetry and Prose* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991), p. 94.

143 Kelly, *The Arts of Poetry*, p. 95.

verse letter, but also, according to Woods, the ‘widespread interpretation of the *Poetria nova* as a rhetorical argument directed at the pope helped teachers describe the work itself as a long letter.’<sup>144</sup> Gower, composing a short letter to Arundel that deploys structures and images from the *Poetria Nova* and its prologue, raises the profile of both author and addressee.

While Gower aims to imitate Geoffrey, the Dedicatory Epistle, along with other texts studied in this chapter, reveals the fourteenth-century poet’s broad familiarity with instruction in letters and mastery at manipulating epistolary forms. In fact, while Canace’s missive demonstrates Gower’s sophisticated reworking of a grammar school text, and the *Epistola ad regem* shows his familiarity with rhetoric of various *specula*, the Dedicatory Epistle reflects Gower’s advanced training in *dictamen*, in composing legal documents based on the dictaminal and notarial arts. In this book’s next chapter, we will see this training made manifest again in Gower’s revision of the discarded conclusion for the *Epistola ad regem*, a revision creating an independent coronation poem for Henry IV.

In the fourteenth century, *dictamen* might be taught in legal or grammar courses, with the aim of cultivating expertise in writing formal prose letters, often for bureaucratic or legal purposes. Dictaminal training sometimes included the *ars notaria*, focused on official documents and deeds. Although England could never boast an education in the *ars dictaminis* that equalled the sophisticated and in-depth teachings available on the Continent — especially in Bologna — and although English dictaminal training was passing out of fashion in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, England did have its *dictatores*, such as Thomas Sampson of Oxford, and Gower could have received instruction in formal, bureaucratic letter writing before *dictamen*’s decline.<sup>145</sup> Where Gower obtained training in

<sup>144</sup> Woods, *Classroom Commentaries*, p. 169.

<sup>145</sup> Both Martin Camargo and Malcolm Richardson point out that the advancement and specialization of the legal profession in the late English fourteenth century actually contributed to *dictamen*’s demise; Richardson positing the important date of 1417, when Chancery clerks and common lawyers, who had earlier taken classes and lived in the same accommodations, were separated and chancery clerk training narrowed in focus and concentrated in simple writs, while lawyers delved into a specialized dictaminal theory that prepared important advocates and diplomats. See Martin Camargo, ed. *Medieval Rhetorics of Prose Composition: Five English Artes Dictandi and Their Tradition*. Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), pp. 34, 115; Malcolm Richardson, ‘The Fading Influence of the Medieval *Ars Dictaminis* in England after 1400’, *Rhetorica*, 19.2 (2001), 238, and Malcolm Richardson, *The Chancery under Henry V* (Kew: Index and List Society, 1999), pp. 56–71. For an analysis of dictaminal teaching in England after the life of Gower, see Richardson’s ‘Ends and Beginnings in London Merchant Epistolary Rhetoric, c. 1460–1520’ in *Public Declarations: Essays on Medieval Rhetoric, Education, and Letters in Honour of Martin Camargo*, ed. by Georgiana Donavin and Denise Stodola (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 125–48.

official writing and for what purposes are matters of debate.<sup>146</sup> As Anthony Mussen sums it up, 'there is, as yet, no unequivocal evidence which definitively confirms his status as a lawyer'.<sup>147</sup> Although current scholarship is divided on whether Gower was a man of law by profession, all agree to the significant contribution that legal discourse makes to his poetry.<sup>148</sup> His obvious command of legal *formulae* coupled with his derisive statements against lawyers has led some to conclude that he was a 'recovering' lawyer, a nonprofessional who mastered a number of procedures, or a special advocate for the Lancastrians.<sup>149</sup> For our purposes, Gower's professional status matters much less than his rhetorical manipulations of bureaucratic discourses, a trend in fourteenth-century literature that Emily Steiner calls

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- 146 Sebastian Sobceki presents persuasive evidence that Gower was a chancery lawyer. See Sebastian Sobceki, 'A Southwark Tale: Gower, the 1381 Poll Tax, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*', *Speculum*, 92.3 (July 2017), 631–39. On the *ars dictaminis* in chancery culture, see Fulvio Delle Donne and Francesco Santi, eds., *Dall' 'Ars Dictaminis' al preumanesimo? Per un profilo letterario del secolo XIII* (Florence: SISMEL Galluzzo Editions, 2013).
- 147 Anthony Musson, 'Men of Law', in *Historians on Gower*, ed. by Stephen H. Rigby with Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2019), p. 226.
- 148 While many scholars see the legal terminology and issues in Gower's poetry as proof of his legal profession, recently scholarship has returned to G. C. Macaulay's position that 'Gower was a litigant, but never a lawyer' (qtd from Conrad Van Dijk, *John Gower and the Limits of the Law* [Cambridge: Brewer, 2013], p. 3). See G. C. Macaulay's introductions to vols 1 (lxii) and 4 (ix–x) of *The Complete Works*. Like Macaulay, Van Dijk reads Gower's denigrating speeches against lawyers in the *Mirour de l'Homme* and the *Vox Clamantis* and sees the paucity of historical evidence as impediments to concluding that Gower was a lawyer.
- 149 On Gower's possible legal training, John H. Fisher cites the poet's self-description in the MO (l. 24373) as a clerk wearing striped sleeves and use of legal terminology. See Fisher *John Gower*, pp. 55–8. More recently, Candace Barrington has argued that the reference to the striped sleeves indicates the poet's role as a retainer-at-law, a legal advocate retained in a court. See Candace Barrington, 'John Gower's Legal Advocacy and "In Praise of Peace"', in *John Gower: Trilingual Poet*, ed. by Elisabeth Dutton with John Hines and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012), p. 122. Embarking on a project to assimilate Gower's life records, John Hines, Nathalie Cohen, and Simon Roffey believe it 'highly plausible' that Gower studied at the Inns of Court. See John Hines, Nathalie Cohen, and Simon Roffey, 'Iohannes Gower, Armiger, Poeta: Records and Memorials of his Life and Death' in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), p. 25. See also Robert Epstein, 'London, Southwark, Westminster: Gower's Urban Contexts' in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 43–60, in which Epstein hypothesizes that Gower came to London in the 1360s when opportunities in royal bureaucracies and the law were on the rise. Epstein also discusses Gower's position as one of Chaucer's attorneys (p. 47). In addition, Matthew Giancarlo (*Parliament and Literature in Late Medieval England* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], pp. 99–105) argues that an extended invective against lawyers in the *Mirour de l'Homme* reflects some sort of direct experience with the legal profession and that the expertise Gower showed in drawing up deeds of property connected to the Septvauns affair indicated the poet's own legal training. In contrast, Conrad van Dijk sees Gower as outside the law commenting on its limitations. See van Dijk, *John Gower and the Limits of the Law*. On Gower's invectives against lawyers see, Meindl, 'Semper Venalis'.

'documentary poetics' and David Matthews has traced back through the thirteenth century.<sup>150</sup> Becoming proficient in the composition of legal documents, Gower would have learned what Martin Camargo calls 'the dictator's lore': methods of stylistic variation, *cursus* (rhythms for clauses), and the five-part epistolary structure.<sup>151</sup> In my summary of the Dedicatory Epistle, we have already seen the five-part structure at work; the leonine hexameters provide an alternative to prose *cursus*. Through such training, Gower associated letters with government documents and petitions, and thus cast missives of advice to his regents and a Dedicatory Epistle to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Although dictaminal training such as Gower would have received during legal instruction often focused upon prose, Ovid's *Heroides*, as we have already seen, presented Gower with models for poetic letters. Moreover, versified composition textbooks modelled on Horace that arose in the twelfth century pitched advice for writing that could be adapted to both poetry and prose; the *Poetria Nova*'s 2,121 hexameter lines participate in this tradition with a verse 'replacement' for Horace's 'old' art.<sup>152</sup> Responding to this trend, in his 'second generation' composition handbook written for students of grammar at the University of Paris, John of Garland includes explicit instruction in *dictamen*.<sup>153</sup> In fact, amidst other teachings on various genres of poetry, Garland devotes Chapter Four of his *Parisiana Poetria* to the art of prose letter writing. There, he gives advice found in many medieval handbooks for professional documents: that the salutation ought to reflect the status of both sender and receiver, that the *exordium* should seek the recipient's 'benevolencia [...] docilitas [...] attentio [...]', that the structure should imitate a Ciceronian oration, that five ways of amplifying material can bring the matter before the addressee's

150 Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 10; David Matthews, *Writing to the King: Nation, Kingship and Literature in England 1250–1350*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

151 Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature*, pp. 99–104; Camargo, *Love Epistle*, p. 9.

152 Kelly, *The Arts of Poetry and Prose*, p. 39. In footnote 10 on that same page, Kelly quotes from 'the earliest known commentary on the *Poetria nova*' to demonstrate how the reception of the 'arts of poetry' included their being used as instruction 'sive in metro sive in prosa'. In fact, the PN implies that its dictates may be used for both poetic and prose composition; at ll. 1851–52 the PN claims that 'meter is straightened by laws, but prose roams along a freer way [...]': Kelly also notes that 'arts of poetry' may be written in verse, as with Geoffrey of Vinsauf's PN and Eberhard's *Laborintus*, or in prose, as with John of Garland's *Parisiana Poetria*, the former being directed to grammar instructors, the latter to pupils (pp. 42–43). Kelly finds the verse arts 'more systematic' and the prose arts more adaptable to daily exercises (p. 43).

153 *The Parisiana Poetria of John of Garland*, ed. and trans. by Traugott Lawlor (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

eyes.<sup>154</sup> When giving instruction in how to open a letter, Garland especially advises the use of *comparacione* and *similitudo* to create a bridge between the experiences of the addressee and the writer's purpose for sending a letter.<sup>155</sup> In the Dedicatory Epistle Gower seems to be following this advice by means of an implicit comparison between the hardships Arundel suffers under the schism and those endured during the times that the codex records. The ease with which verse handbooks offered advice that might be used in composing either poetry or prose might have encouraged the authors of bureaucratic prose to try out dictaminal rhetoric in verse. With the *Parisiana Poetria* Garland intended to 'out-sell' the handbooks of his predecessors in the *ars poetriae* by including more desirable instruction in prose, and the textbook to beat was Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*. We have recently seen in this book's Chapter Three that Gower constructs a theory of Marian rhetoric on the teachings of the *Parisiana Poetria* and other rhetorical texts centred on the Mother of God. For the Dedicatory Epistle, however, Gower chose the more popular *Poetria Nova* as the best platform for addressing an archbishop.

Gower might have accessed Geoffrey's famous text in a variety of ways. Teachers of dictamen in England who deployed the *Poetria Nova* included Thomas Merke, one of the Benedictines whom Martin Camargo has shown to be influential in establishing late medieval English rhetorical traditions.<sup>156</sup> Merke's *Formula moderni et usitati dictaminis* combines advice from the *Poetria Nova* and the short version of the *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi* into a flexible textbook for both undergraduate and graduate studies.<sup>157</sup> Not only grammar masters of a previous generation such as John of Garland or Benedictines such as Merke knew the *Poetria Nova* well, but also Gower's friend Geoffrey Chaucer, who made a famous (and humorous) reference to it in *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, and countless others who received an intermediate education in grammar and rhetoric.<sup>158</sup> An unprecedented 220 manuscripts of the *Poetria Nova* survive, and the content of Gower's Dedicatory Epistle, as well as internal

154 For the quoted portion of this sentence, see *The Parisiana Poetria*, ll. 14–16.

155 *Parisiana Poetria*, ll. 50–64.

156 Martin Camargo, 'Beyond the *Libri catoniani*: Models of Latin Prose Style at Oxford University ca. 1400', *Mediaeval Studies*, 56 (1994), 169; Martin Camargo, 'If You Can't Join Them, Beat Them: or, When Grammar Met Business Writing (in Fifteenth-Century Oxford)', in *Letter Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. by Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 73–74; Martin Camargo, 'Rhetoricians in Black: Benedictine Monks and Rhetorical Revival in Medieval Oxford', in *New Chapters in the History of Rhetoric*, ed. by Laurent Pernot (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 375–84.

157 Camargo, 'Beyond the *Libri catoniani*', p. 170.

158 Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Nun's Priest's Tale', in *The Canterbury Tales* VII, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986), ll. 3347–54.

references in the *Vox Clamantis*, shows that he had studied at least one of them. In the Dedicatory Epistle, the combination of a pun on the pope's name, a constellation of light imagery, and an emphasis on the aged youth topos proves this influence.

Whether or not the Dedicatory Epistle was intended as an introduction to the *Vox*, the missive's flight of fancy on Thomas Arundel's name links to a rhetorical display in *Vox* 3 openly imitating the *Poetria Nova*. As Macaulay pointed out in his edition of the *Vox* and as Robertson Balfour Daniels elaborated in his unpublished dissertation, Gower, when inveighing against the papal schism in the *Vox*'s Book 3, Chapter 10, refashions the *Poetria Nova*'s opening pun on Innocent III's name in an address to Pope Clement.<sup>159</sup> Just as at the beginning of the *Poetria Nova*'s Dedication Geoffrey of Vinsauf addresses Innocent as 'Nocent', removing 'In' from Innocent's name and wittily remarking that presenting the papal name without a head was the only way to save the meter, Gower, also commenting on a pope in *Vox* 3.10, quips: 'So the one now called Clement is far from being clement, and he is wrong in keeping this name, for his name lacks a prefix.' The prefix that 'Clement' lacks, of course, is 'In', and Gower would like to declare a contemporary pope 'In/Clement' so that the name would reflect responsibility for the schism. While Geoffrey of Vinsauf must remove an 'In' to maintain the dactylic hexameter line, Gower would like to add an 'in' to reflect a quality of character.

Although Gower's Dedicatory Epistle to Arundel does not rely on separating or adding the morpheme 'In', the letter imitates Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Dedication while revealing the delight we have seen the medieval poet take in the multivalent significance of names, especially of 'John.' Just

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<sup>159</sup> Macaulay, *Works* 4, p. xxxii; Robertson Balfour Daniels, 'Figures of Rhetoric in John Gower's English Works' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Yale University, 1934). Translation of VC 3.10 from Stockton, trans., 'The Major Latin Works of John Gower', p. 137. This passage and Daniels' assertions about Gower's knowledge of the PN were subjects of contention in the middle of the twentieth century. See this book's Introduction for a summary and contextualization of the following debate. James J. Murphy ('John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and the First Discussion of Rhetoric in the English Language, *Philological Quarterly*, 41 [1962], 401–11 [esp. 405–08]) thought Daniels to be making connections between Gower and the PN on slim evidence, since the convention of the headless name was widespread in medieval texts and much older than the PN. However, Masayoshi Itô found other proofs in the VC of allusions to the PN, the most convincing of which exists in the *Epistola ad regem*. See Itô, 'Gower's Knowledge', pp. 3–20. Itô posits that Gower read PN in a manuscript such as one in the Durham Cathedral Library cited by Beichner in which the *Aurora*, a prominent citation in Gower, is accompanied by PN. See Paul Beichner, Introduction, *Aurora*, ed. by Paul Beichner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), p. xxix. Later scholarship based its analyses on Itô's conclusion that Gower was knowledgeable about the PN and skilled in rhetoric. See, for instance, Eve Salisbury, 'Remembering Origins: Gower's Monstrous Body Politic', in *Re-Visioning Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998), p. 173.



as Geoffrey stretches the discussion of 'Innocent' to nine lines in the beginning of his Dedication, Gower's Dedicatory Epistle offers an extended meditation on the meaning of 'Thomas Arundel' that displays the poet's etymological wit and respect for his addressee's identity. Beginning the *salutatio* with a polyptoton and claim of lineage involving Arundel's name — 'Successor Thome, Thomas', that is, 'Thomas, successor of Thomas' — Gower links Arundel to Becket's sainthood and suffering, just as Geoffrey establishes Innocent's name in the lineage of apostles Bartholomew, Andrew, John, and Peter.<sup>160</sup> Multiple allusions in the Dedicatory Epistle to the light emanating from Arundel suggest nimbed sainthood, and though not martyred like Becket, Arundel saw his brother and other friends and supporters executed during the struggles of the 1380s and 1390s.<sup>161</sup> Finally repudiated and exiled after years of faithful service and advocacy for Richard, Arundel endured, as Becket did, the punishments of a supremely powerful friend.<sup>162</sup>

By developing the ways in which Innocent's name desires conformity with the Pope — '[n]omen tibi vult similiari' (the name wishes to be similar to you) — Geoffrey of Vinsauf amplifies on papal attributes beyond spiritual lineage.<sup>163</sup> Gower elaborates on the strength and comfort inherent in Arundel's gender fluidity, on how the archbishop's first name accords with his manliness ('Mas') and his last name must be understood through association with both arrows and motherly swallows.<sup>164</sup> The stress on masculinity in Arundel's first name balances the femininity in the avian last name (*hirundo* [swallow]) and firmly associates the archbishop with the vigorous champion Henry of Lancaster, who restores England to right rule and Arundel to the bishopric. Gower's connection between the second syllable of 'Thomas' and manliness surfaces also in the *Cronica* as the archbishop is called by his first name there, rather than by the heraldic symbols used to identify other actors on the Ricardian stage, such as the Swan, Horse, and Bear for the Duke of Gloucester, Earl of Arundel, and Earl of Warwick, respectively.<sup>165</sup> In the *Cronica* Thomas is 'mas' as he faces

160 DE, l. 1.

161 'Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury', *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 2, ed. by Leslie Stephen (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1885), pp. 137–41.

162 PN, ll. 10–12.

163 PN, l. 3; DE, l. 37.

164 DE, l. 37.

165 The opening gloss to Part I of the *Cronica Tripartita* explains the name symbolism. Gower may be referring to Thomas by his first name to distinguish him from his brother Richard Arundel, the Horse, who was executed for treason, or perhaps Gower thought it less appropriate to identify an archbishop by heraldic images. For references to Thomas Arundel by his first name in the CrT, see the gloss before Part II, Part II, ll. 242–43, and Part III, l. 136. On the difficulty of a riddling style as in Gower's use of names see, Andrew Galloway, 'The Rhetoric of Riddling in Late Medieval England: The "Oxford Riddles", the *Secretum philosophorum*, and the Riddles in *Piers Plowman*', *Speculum*, 70 (1995), 68–105.

the hardships of betrayal and exile with moral constancy. He is 'eloquent, skilled and obedient to the law', while parliament and king pervert the law with an order for the archbishop's exile.<sup>166</sup> As the *Cronica* refers to the archbishop by his first name, 'Thomas' provides a term between 'Ricardus' and 'Henricus', the archbishop having long supported the former before events turned his spiritual protection to the latter.<sup>167</sup>

Parsing the archbishop's last name, Gower declares him the homonymic 'hirundo' (swallow), named Thomas 'de Arundell', in the Dedicatory Epistle's gloss and 'Arundella' in the letter itself: a mother bird protecting the English people under her wings.<sup>168</sup> Toward the end of the Dedicatory Epistle, the archbishop is said to gather all 'sub cura'.<sup>169</sup> If Gower wrote the letter's initial version when Arundel first came to the See of Canterbury, the poet would have been observing the archbishop's new care for all England. By the time of the Dedicatory Epistle's final revisions, Arundel was re-established in his ecclesiastical nest. According to the *Cronica*, Arundel's avian role came to fruition when he was 'illaqueatus' (ensnared) in a political trap and put to flight from the realm, only to return 'veluti galina sub alis' (like hen with chick beneath his wings), Henry and supporters nestled against the holy one's feathers.<sup>170</sup> While Richard's allies are compared to baby crows who screech for spoil, Arundel's company is nourished and confident.<sup>171</sup> 'Secum [...] saluos duxit' (Guiding the men to safety), Arundel is one of the great heroes of England's return to righteousness and glory, according to the *Cronica*.<sup>172</sup>

166 CrT, Part II, l. 245, translation mine. The Latin original states: *legibus ornatus, facundus morigeratus*.

167 Nigel Saul makes the point that Gower's political allegiances follow those of Arundel. See Nigel Saul, 'John Gower: Prophet or Turncoat?' in *John Gower Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation and Tradition*, ed. by Elisabeth Dutton with John Hines and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), p. 97.

168 DE, l. 37, *Claret Arundella quasi Sol de luce nouella*, shows the difficulty of determining when Gower might be alluding to arrows or swallows when making a reference to the archbishop's last name. Macaulay (see CrT, Explanatory Note 9) thought the translation 'The Swallow shines as a sun with new light' unlikely, and perhaps Gower meant readers to think more in this line of a glinting arrow (*harundo*) shot by the sun god Apollo. Nevertheless, in his simple use of the phrase *sub cura* in DE, l. 46, Gower suggests the avian imagery made explicit in CrT, as argued above.

169 DE, l. 46.

170 CrT, Part II, l. 248; CrT, Part III, l. 138. Translation of the former line mine. The reference to gathering men as a hen does her chicks is an allusion to Matthew 23.37 and Luke 13.34 in which Jesus expresses the desire to gather the people of Jerusalem to him, though they stone and kill the prophets. Gower deploys Jesus's feminizing self-reference in a Christological description of Arundel.

171 CrT, Part III, ll. 115–17. Although Henry of Lancaster is called by his first name, he, like Arundel, is also associated with avian imagery: most often with the eagle throughout CrT and in 'H. aquile pullus'.

172 CrT, Part III, l. 139.

The Dedicatory Epistle, both masculinizing Arundel's role as the brave Thomas and feminizing it as the spiritually maternal *hirundo*, makes the archbishop a totalized figure for English salvation, the perfect recipient of a book bemoaning the sins of the times — the struggles of the salvific process.

Performing a broad spectrum of gender roles that protect, comfort, and redeem England, Arundel is nearly deified in a final association between his last name and Apollo. In the second pun on 'Arundel' as 'harundo' (arrow), Gower connects the archbishop to sun gods and Apollo's bow. Like Geoffrey of Vinsauf, he declares his patron 'quasi Sol' (like the Sun), a Phoebus or the Christ.<sup>173</sup> While Geoffrey declares Innocent III 'alone like the world's sun', radiating light out from the papal curia, Gower calls Arundel 'noster Phebus', illuminating all things around himself while the curia is dark with schism.<sup>174</sup> Gower begs the archbishop to bring the healing power exhibited in nurturing England's new leadership to the sustenance of the church. Arundel is the exterminating arrow launched by Phoebus's archery, pinning and killing anything arising from England's 'failed light' and 'darkened faith': 'Claret Arundella' (the arrow sheds light).<sup>175</sup>

Having interpreted the name of his holy patron Arundel in a manner similar to Geoffrey of Vinsauf's encomium to Innocent III and having done so in brilliant light imagery, Gower also imitates the 'aged youth' topos in the *Poetria Nova's* Dedication.<sup>176</sup> Remarking on Geoffrey's use of this topos and its manifestations in late medieval literature, Eve Salisbury declares that the aged youth 'constitute[s] both / and configurations that conjoin youth and age in a disjunctive queering of time, innocence, and experience'.<sup>177</sup> In rhetorical practice, this means convincing the reader to suspend both disbelief and concepts of grammar, since no one, no matter how gifted, can live in two eras at once, and since the noun 'youth' is not merely modified by the adjective 'aged', but co-equal with it. Because Innocent became pope at the young age of thirty-seven, Geoffrey exclaims over the Pope's paradoxical embodiment of both vigour and wisdom:

173 PN, l. 30; DE, l. 35. Yeager ('Gower's "Epistle to Archbishop Arundel"', pp. 23, 28) connects the DE's pervasive light and sun imagery to both the Sermon on the Mount and Richard II's emblem.

174 PN, ll. 28–31. DE, l. 12.

175 DE, ll. 11 and 35. Andrew Galloway interprets the light imagery in reference to Arundel as a 'learned guide'. See Andrew Galloway, 'Gower in his Most Learned Role, and the Peasants' Revolt of 1381', *Mediaevalia*, 16 (1993 [for 1990]), 344–45.

176 For a discussion of the 'puer senex' topos in medieval literature, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by William Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1953), pp. 99–100.

177 Eve Salisbury, *Chaucer and the Child* (New York: Palgrave, 2017), p. 190.

You quite transcend the human condition: where will physical  
youthfulness like yours be found in a man of such age,  
or where a heart so mature implanted in one so young? [...] *[A]*n  
unheard of thing has now, in our days, come to pass:  
a pope who is Peter the elder, and a pope who is John the youth.<sup>178</sup>

In contrast, Arundel was not quite so young around 1402 when final revisions to the Dedicatory Epistle were made, but he was younger than Gower, and the poet capitalizes on the difference in their ages to describe the archbishop as a *senex iuventus*. Arundel in his late forties, the poet himself in his early seventies, Gower declares: 'I have always loved you as if you were my father'.<sup>179</sup> While the *Poetria Nova* was well-recognized in the fourteenth century by the Dedication's opening words — 'Papa stupor mundi' — Gower addresses 'pater' Thomas, who is the luminous wonder of the blind poet's dimming world.<sup>180</sup> Gower insists that the man whose spiritual dynamism spreads light and love across not only the poet's own receding life, but also a dark and suffering land must be figured as if that man were a wise ancient blessing the struggling poet and church.

Puns on names, light imagery, the aged youth topos — each of these features is common enough in medieval liminal discourse. To note all three in hexameter dedications of approximately the same length that are intended for an ecclesiastical figure who is like a father is to recognize an imitation. Elaborating upon the template provided by Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Dedication, Gower places a special emphasis on the attributes and motivations that he shares with his holy addressee and goes so far as to suggest that, in certain matters, he and Arundel play parallel roles. Even beyond the aged youth topos in which he casts the much younger archbishop as a wise father to his obedient youth, Gower insists on the concordances between himself and Arundel. The juxtaposition of the opening gloss and the Dedicatory Epistle provide the first hint of Gower and Arundel as alternate authorities. In the gloss, Gower places himself first in status by setting his own name and personal description ahead of the archbishop's: there it is 'senex et cecus Iohannes Gower' (old and blind John Gower) who sent the following letter to Thomas Arundel. In contrast, the *salutatio* of the Dedicatory Epistle places the archbishop first in authority as it begins 'Successor Thome, Thomas' (Thomas, successor of Thomas [Becket]) and minimizes the author's presence in the first-person conjugation of the verb 'do' (I give).<sup>181</sup> While the emphasis on the author in the gloss accords with the *accessus ad auctores* tradition of identifying

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<sup>178</sup> PN, ll. 20–22, 26–27.

<sup>179</sup> DE, l. 25.

<sup>180</sup> DE, l. 23.

<sup>181</sup> DE, ll. 1–2.

useful information concerning the writer of any text, the emphasis on the archbishop in the Dedicatory Epistle accords with the dictaminal tradition of setting the name of a superior addressee ahead of a socially inferior writer, just as Vinsauf had set his 'Papa' at the head of the *Poetria Nova*. By first privileging his self-identification in the gloss, with Arundel being the recipient of the poet's craft, and then emphasizing Arundel's spiritual lineage in the Dedicatory Epistle, with Gower being the recipient of the archbishop's grace, Gower creates a catachresis in which both men hold authority over different documentary realms and have significant gifts to offer each other. The illustration of the capital 'S' (for 'Successor') beginning the Dedicatory Epistle, in which the figure of Arundel smiles amiably and moves toward someone, while his right hand is open to receive a book, enacts the approximation of the archbishop to Gower (Figure 3).<sup>182</sup>

The most important way in which Gower's and Arundel's roles intertwine in the Dedicatory Epistle is through their symbiotic therapies: amplifying on the light imagery found in the *Poetria Nova*, Gower infuses his Dedicatory Epistle with images of disease and blindness on the one hand and of healing and recovery on the other.<sup>183</sup> Although his eyes were failing in 1402, Gower, as many critics have noted, had deployed the topos of age and blindness since the 1380s as a self-fashioning strategy that imbued 'John' with stature and wisdom;<sup>184</sup> the Dedicatory Epistle notes that his mental powers continued to be strong, suggesting the poet's piercing in/sight. Certainly in need of the archbishop's consolation (and perhaps, as Yeager suggests, his protection against punishment for chastising the church and refashioning biblical passages), the poet nevertheless offers some solace of his own: a text that will induce in Arundel a purgative weeping and provide him with the clarity and strength. Just as Gower is

182 Oxford, All Souls College, MS 98, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

183 A growing body of literature addresses Gower's references to health, disability, blindness, and age, as well as his presentation of the text or of dialogue within the text as curative. See Jonathan Hsy, 'Blind Advocacy: Blind Readers, Disability Theory, and Accessing John Gower', *Accessus*, 1.1 (2013), <<http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=accessus>>; James M. Palmer, 'Bodily and Spiritual Healing through Conversation and Storytelling: Genius as Physician and Confessor in the *Confessio Amantis*', in *Approaches to Teaching the Poetry of John Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager and Brian Gastle (New York: MLA, 2011), p. 53; Tory Vandeventer Pearman, 'Blindness, Confession, and Re-Membering in Gower's *Confessio*', *Accessus*, 1.1 (2013), <<http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=accessus>>; R. F. Yeager, 'Gower in Winter: Last Poems', in *The Medieval Python: The Purposive and Provocative Work of Terry Jones*, ed. by R. F. Yeager and Toshiyuki Takamiya (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 87–103. In June 2021, The Gower Project sponsored a virtual symposium entitled 'Hope and Healing in Gower'. From that roundtable came a special issue of the same title in *Accessus*: <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/accessus/vol7/iss1/>>.

184 See, for instance, Yeager, 'Gower in Winter', pp. 87–103.



Figure 3. Archbishop Arundel, dedication portrait. Oxford, All Souls College, MS 98, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>. Reproduced by permission of The Warden and Fellows of All Souls College, Oxford.

worn with the care of his infirmities, so the archbishop is burdened by the ruptured church, both men capable of offering care and in need of curing. The material aspect of the letter, too, is both a sign and a salve of illness. With its many erasures beneath lines underscoring Gower's fleeting sight, the Dedicatory Epistle bears wounds, wounds to the parchment skin, wounds inflicted by all humanity upon the church and themselves, wounds in which the poet finds himself complicit, as he scrapes out previous versions concerning his own part on the Ricardian stage.<sup>185</sup> The book, carrying blemishes from age and use much like its author, nevertheless radiates

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<sup>185</sup> From my own notes on Oxford, All Souls College, MS 98, the erasures to DE are as follows:  
 Line 3: Erasure marks under *Quod* and *scriptu*.  
 Line 4: Erasure marks under the last two words: *meus stimuletur*.

spiritual health and understanding: it is a 'volumen' (volume) 'magis ad lumen' ([bringing Arundel] more toward the light).<sup>186</sup> Arundel, the Phoebus of England's church, reflects light onto all things, the poet's blindness mitigated, the dark age illuminated.<sup>187</sup> The splendour of the archbishop's example applies a much needed 'medicamen' (medicine) for the church's healing. In his hope for a unified Roman Catholicism, Gower has the Dedicatory Epistle sewn into the front of a yet undetermined manuscript: the missive is a fresh patch, woven by this new 'Geoffrey' to bind the sorrows of one archbishop.

## Conclusion

Deploying letters from Ovid, mirrors for princes, dictaminal and poetical manuals, Gower invested his speakers with powerful, wise, or curative address. Since epistles comprised discursive instruction in all stages of life — in grammar school, professional training, and court experience — it is not surprising that Gower chose to write letters for such varied purposes and contexts. While he deployed epistolary rhetoric in order to channel secular women's voices, spread Aristotelian training, and plead for unification of the church, Gower or his epistolary narrators spoke directly to both individual readers and to a larger public desirous of hearing feminine oratory, goodly advice, and comforting words.

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Lines 9, 10, 11: Erasure marks under most of this blocked out passage, with the exception of the first two words in Line 9: *Hoc ad*.

Line 15: Erasure marks under *In spectro* and *de*.

Line 17: Erasure under the third word in the line.

Line 18: Erasure under the first two words and *memorabor*.

Line 20: Whole line looks to have been erased.

Line 24: Erasure under *mentis animi diu dispone*.

Lines 26–34: Whole block of text with previous erasure underneath it.

Line 42: *Clara que luce fuit ad eam* and the last word in line (*repressit*) had erasure underneath.

Line 43 Erasure under *lumen quia tale meretur*.

<sup>186</sup> DE, l. 14.

<sup>187</sup> DE, ll. 11–12.





## Epistles and Rhetorical Experimentation, Part II

### *Music and Letters in the Trentham Manuscript*

From appropriations of the *Heroides* to royal missives to presentation prologues, Gower, as we have just seen in Part I of this discussion, adapted letters for the purposes of constructing individuated voices for fictional heroines, an obedient but hortatory narrator, and liminal discourses. In Canace's letter to Machaire, the *Epistola ad regem* to Richard II, and the Dedictory Epistle to Archbishop Arundel, Gower employs epistolary discourses to open a channel for voices yet unheard in trying personal or political times, for Canace's voice in abandonment, a regal adviser's amidst the inattention of youths, and a sympathetic compatriot's when all England has dissolved in tears. Building upon our investigation of the contexts in which Gower penned letters and the strategies that he used to compose them, this chapter bears on the rhetorical forms of Gower's literary epistles.<sup>1</sup> It turns to the ways that Gower connects (or disconnects) epistolary structures to song in two parts of the Trentham Manuscript: 'Rex Celi Deus', an epistle to Henry IV celebrating his coronation, and the *Cinkante Balades*, a collection of fifty-four ballades, many of which are composed as missives.<sup>2</sup>

The Trentham Manuscript, housed today in the British Library as MS Additional 59495, is an exceptional collection of Gower's late work in all three languages and a fascinating study in generic experiments in the honour of its dedicatee, the newly crowned Henry IV. Among these experiments, manifested in 'Rex Celi Deus' and the *Cinkante Balades*,

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<sup>1</sup> In its discussion of epistolary forms, this chapter relies on the work of Martin Camargo. From the bibliography of Camargo's scholarship, the following entries have been especially informative. From Camargo's books: *Medieval Rhetorics of Prose Composition: Five English 'Artes Dictandi' and Their Tradition* (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995); *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991); *Ars Dictaminis, Ars Dictandi*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991). From his essays and articles: 'Defining Medieval Rhetoric' in *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West 1100–1540: Essays in Honour of John O. Ward*, ed. by C. Mews, C. Nederman, and R. M. Thomson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 21–34; 'Tria sunt: The Long and the Short of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi', *Speculum*, 74.4 (1999), 935–55.

<sup>2</sup> London, British Library, MS Additional 59495. The Trentham Manuscript may be viewed in its entirety online at The Gower Project's texts, sources, and manuscripts page, [www.gowerproject.com](http://www.gowerproject.com).

Gower infuses music into the unlikely vessel of petitionary verse and silences song in the traditionally tuneful ballades. By imbuing the epistolary 'Rex Celi Deus' with the strains of a popular hymn, Gower invokes the celebratory unison singing of the *vox populi* at Henry's coronation; by structuring several of the *Cinkante Balades* in the unlikely form of the documentary epistle and presenting only one *chançon* from an unrequited lover to his lady, Gower emphasizes textuality and minimizes song in a genre that was steeped in music. Gower mentions 'song' only three times in the entire ballade cycle, once in the poem he declares a *chançon* and twice in poems referring to ditties that will be sung when the lover is on his or her own.<sup>3</sup> Through the minimization of song in the ballades, Gower associates inharmonious courtship with empty ritual and, through the single *chançon*, emphasizes the sorrows of singing in isolation, rather than the English chorus inspired by Henry's coronation. While 'Rex Celi Deus' is a love song in missive to the new monarch, the *Cinkante Balades* are generally love documents without melody passed between dissonant lovers.

Gower's experimentation with music in his epistolary poetics shows once again how deeply invested he was in classical and medieval rhetorical theory, theory that for centuries had connected literary verse to song. As Genius declares in the 'Rethorique' lecture, 'Whan wordes medlen with the song, / It doth plesance wel the more'.<sup>4</sup> During an education in prosody, Gower would have learned that '[p]oetria, as the art of metrics, [had been] part of *musica*, at least from St Augustine onwards [...]'.<sup>5</sup> Carrying classical instruction on musical verse into the medieval classroom, John of Garland, one of Gower's most honoured medieval language masters as we saw in Chapters Two, Three, and Four, teaches the strains of Ovidian meter to his fourteenth-century heir. According to Margaret Bent, during the fourteenth century, poetry and music were increasingly represented together in order to 'bridge [...] the arts of the trivium and quadrivium', and Gower builds this bridge in the *Confessio Amantis*, especially in Book 7 on the liberal arts.<sup>6</sup> In the Latin verses that open

3 The three ballades with references to singing are the only song of the collection (CB XXXV, XL, and XLIII. In XL, ll. 22–23, the unhappy suitor mentions the 'chançon verrai' (true song) that he will sing outside of the lovers' shared discourse. In XLIII, ll. 7–8, the lady declares that in the future she will sing a lament because of the lover's unfaithfulness. XLIII itself is a debate poem accusing the suitor of being as disloyal as Hercules or Jason. In the envoy, at l. 26, the lady calls the ballade a 'complegnte', rather than a song.

4 CA 7, ll. 1586–87.

5 Margaret Bent, 'Grammar and Rhetoric in Late Medieval Polyphony: Modern Metaphor or Old Simile?' in *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 53. *Aurelii Augustini De musica*, ed. by Giovanni Marzi (Florence: Sansoni, 1969), l.2.

6 Bent, 'Grammar and Rhetoric', p. 53.

the *Confessio*, Gower invokes the musical Carmentis's help with poetical composition, and in 'Quam cixere', a poem observing the *Confessio*'s completion, Gower declares himself a 'champion of song' [Carminis Athleta] as well as a satirist and poet. In Book 7 on the liberal arts, he makes a connection between the rhythms of *musica* (from the quadrivium) and the delivery of rhetoric (from the trivium). Defining the second discipline under the sway of 'Mathematique', Gower declares that music consists in 'Armonie' and 'melodie', which humans are taught to 'pronounce' or project through 'vois and soun of instrument'.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the numerical art of music underscores the tuneful sounds of human speech, song, and instrumental performance. In the prosody of his poems, Gower demonstrates *musica*'s support for *rhetorica*, for instance in the elegiac distichs that count out the miseries of the *Visio Anglie*'s biblical narrator or the iambic octameter couplets that bundle Genius's moral lessons. Bearing upon the 'Armonie' created by a musical score, whether it be set for a speech or a song, Gower insists that the collusion of 'Musique' and 'Rethorique' results in social harmony, as R. F. Yeager has argued concerning Gower's references to the legendary Arion the harper.<sup>8</sup> In the *Confessio*'s definition of 'Rethorique', Genius lectures on the power of rhetoric to 'make amendes for the wrong', and music not only softens hard feelings, but it also gives pleasure.<sup>9</sup> Having been educated in the 'mixing' of music and rhetoric and having conveyed this instruction in Book 7 of the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower acts on that instruction when enhancing 'Rex Celi Deus' with hymn-singing or adapting the *Cinkante Balades* to contemporary French expectations concerning musical ballades. As Genius suggests in the 'Rethorique' lecture, song increases the audience's satisfaction: Henry and the English people are meant to delight in the surprisingly musical 'Rex Celi Deus' and to feel sorrow for the lovers in the *Balades* whose passion only once spills over into song.

An alliance between verse and song presented itself to Gower not only in liberal arts instruction, but also in the poetry of Gower's contemporaries on the continent. The *Cinkante Balades*, with its associations with and rejection of song, link Gower to literary achievements in France, for instance the thirteenth-century *chansonniers*, compilations of French vernacular songs, Machaut's fourteenth-century musical compositions for missive-like ballades, and Deschamps's innovations in ballade form and musical nature.<sup>10</sup> Ardis Butterfield demonstrates that within these thirteenth- and fourteenth-century efforts in French, 'changes in genre coincide with

<sup>7</sup> CA 7, ll. 163–69.

<sup>8</sup> R. F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for a New Arion* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> CA 7, l. 1585.

<sup>10</sup> Ardis Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France: From Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See Deschamps's statements on

changes in transcription and notation.’<sup>11</sup> In other words, while grammar and rhetoric manuals of the period yoke poetry and music, composers and poets were investigating the range of this connection in generic play and representation of sound, whether that sound arise from vocal, instrumental, or verbal music. Gower participated in generic manipulations of song and sound in both ‘Rex Celi Deus’ and the *Cinkante Balades*. Just as he wished his audience to hear the chant for a well-known hymn playing in the background of ‘Rex Celi Deus’, Gower probably assumed that anyone performing *balade XXXV* (the single *chançon*) would sing a popular melody. Although there are no musical notations for the *Cinkante Balades* in Trentham, secular music in courts and town squares or music composed by the great French song masters could have been imported for XXXV and perhaps heard as accompaniment to the other ballades that may not be songs but include famous refrains. Thus, in the *Cinkante Balades* Gower opens the possibility for musical scores, but in providing only one *chançon*, he limits the opportunities for singing them. His explorations of *cantus* in the ballades surprise the audience by largely withholding song in a genre in which the singer is the standard narrator. Making or breaking links between poetry and music, Gower bridges not only disciplines, but *avante garde* artistry with centuries-old teachings.

Beyond Gower’s shockingly limited references to song in the ballade form where it was *de rigueur*, he imported the concept of the tuneful epistle to another sort of poetry where it was not. ‘Rex Celi Deus’, a coronation poem providing a defence for Henry’s usurpation of Richard II’s throne, has more in common with the prosaic *Record and Process*, in which the Lancastrian view of the regime change was published, than to literary strategies for melodic ballades.<sup>12</sup> Frank Grady regards ‘Rex Celi Deus’ as an exhibit of the ‘generation of 1399’, a literary production concerning Henry IV’s accession that adopts ‘textual models and rhetorical tactics drawn from the bureaucratic and legal culture in which their authors were immersed: parliamentary reportage, legal instruments, chronicles, and records.’<sup>13</sup> In doing so, ‘Rex Celi Deus’ illustrates the ‘documentary

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the ‘musique naturelle’ of verse in *Eustache Deschamps: L’Art de dictier*, ed. and trans. by Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1994), pp. 60–68.

<sup>11</sup> Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, p. 171.

<sup>12</sup> For an edition of the *Record and Process*, see David R. Carlson, *The Deposition of Richard II: ‘The Record and Process of the Renunciation and Deposition of Richard II’ (1399) and Related Writings* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies Press, 2007), pp. 23–65.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Grady, ‘The Generation of 1399’, in *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England*, ed. by Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 204.

poetics' analysed by Emily Steiner and discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>14</sup> David Matthews has demonstrated the widespread practice of documentary poetics from the thirteenth century on, and David R. Carlson regards Gower's work as the culmination of this literary trajectory.<sup>15</sup> As we have seen, literary addresses to kings such as 'Rex Celi Deus' derive from political petitions and dictaminal practices that are hardly musical. Although melodic writing is not a goal of dictaminal teaching, it is not as if political poetry could never be sung; the Robin Hood ballads and their prototypes such as 'The Outlaw's Song of Trailbaston' exhibit this possibility.<sup>16</sup> Gower, however, in 'Rex Celi Deus' goes beyond alluding to a popular tune that might be associated with poetical addresses to a monarch. In a masterful generic engagement, he introduces hymn-singing into his coronation letter to the king, fortifying what would otherwise be a courtly address with liturgical fervour and rendering it even more appropriate for the coronation. By importing sacred music into his political letter, Gower sets Henry's actions in the purview of God's love and allows for devotional singing to his king. Chanting his own adoration of Henry, Gower brings the petition of 'Rex Celi Deus' closer to the ballades to the beloved.

Although music allows for the generic approximation of petition and ballade, the two parts of the Trentham Manuscript studied in this chapter represent opposing literary experiments: while 'Rex Celi Deus' infuses music into an epistolary poem associated with more prosaic government documents, the *Cinkante Balades*, employing one of the *formes fixes* often set to music, denies that most of the verses are songs and instead declares many of them — to the astonishment of anyone familiar with ballade traditions — to be letters.<sup>17</sup> Although ballades often have an epistolary function when they represent poetic messages passed between lovers, the French traditions in which Gower was working recommended other literary forms than the ballade for verse epistles. Further, ballades are far

14 Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). She coins the phrase 'documentary poetics' on page 10.

15 David Matthews, *Writing to the King: Nation, Kingship and Literature in England 1250–1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); David R. Carlson, *John Gower: Poetry and Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012).

16 Matthews, *Writing to the King*, pp. 116–19. For 'The Outlaw's Song of Trailbaston' and others in English like it, see Thomas Wright, ed. and trans., *The Political Songs of England: From the Reign of John to that of Edward II* (London: Camden Society, 1839).

17 In the CB, Gower employs one of the traditions *formes fixes*, or 'fixed forms' of three eight-line stanzas and an envoy. On the relationship between music and ballade, see Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, p. 273–90. It is significant that during Gower's lifetime, this relationship was changing, as Eustache Deschamps broke from Guillaume Machaut's practice of setting ballades to music and asserted instead that the 'natural' music of the words is superior to 'artificial' compositions for the voice and instruments. See note 6 above and more discussion of this issue below in the section entitled *Cinkante Balades*.

from the textual, sometimes bureaucratic, records that often constitute the medieval letter. Even literary missives to kings and dedicatees, as we saw in Part 1, are related to government petitions and cultural rituals that re-inscribe official relations established in court and church. By declaring many of the *Cinkante Balades* 'lettres', Gower compares these ballades to Canace's letter and to other missives that he appropriated from the *Heroides* to create a channel for passionate voices; in the *Cinkante Balades* poetic epistles express ardent feelings of not only women, but also male suitors. Through these experiments with letters and songs — and the relationships of these forms to gender — Gower explored constructions of narrator, delivery, and audience. In 'Rex Celi Deus', the narrator presents himself as a royal servant, chanting Henry IV's coronation along with all compatriots who adore Christ and the hero beloved by both England and Christ. While 'Rex Celi Deus' glories in the liturgical melding of epistle and hymn, none of the *Cinkante Balades* called 'lettre' make reference to music and thus lack appeals to interpersonal harmony. Conversely, neither the single *chançoun* nor the few other ballades that mention music deploy epistolary form and thus lack a direct connection to their cherished audience. Although the various narrators and the recipients of verses in the *Cinkante Balades* are all ostensibly 'beloveds' like Henry in 'Rex Celi Deus', only one of them approximates the new king's success in the fields of battle and love. The others can be isolated in their distant service to each other as well as in their reception of their lover's verses, the ballades called 'lettre' emphasizing one narrator's lonely writing and the single *chançoun* picturing its narrator's production of music in a place far away from his lady. Whereas in 'Rex Celi Deus', the new king is surrounded by a coronation chorus, in the *Cinkante Balades* individuals, separated from the rest by their desires, hear epistles from a messenger or a song performed by a minstrel.<sup>18</sup> The recipient of these messages is also characterized diversely through deployment of epistolary forms and allusion to song. Although in 'Rex Celi Deus' the collusion of music and epistolarity speaks to an individual audience (Henry IV) who celebrates a historical transition with his kingdom, in the *Cinkante Balades* the few references to singing in the non-epistolary poems signal separation and isolation for both audience and speaker. Whereas in the musical ballades there is a rupture of joy, and in their lack of missive structure a failure to connect, in the melody of 'Rex Celi Deus' Gower surrounds his audience with the sound of his message.

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<sup>18</sup> CB, 35, l. 24.

## The Trentham Manuscript

The Trentham Manuscript is an excellent site for hearing Gower's messages because it was inscribed with purpose around the time of Henry IV's coronation in October 1399.<sup>19</sup> Many scholars believe that Trentham constitutes a coronation gift, or a template for such a presentation, and, as we shall see, 'Rex Celi Deus' includes layered references to the coronation ceremony. Nevertheless, Sebastian Sobecki has presented convincing evidence that Gower produced Trentham, containing the *Cinkante Balades*, *Traitié selonc les auctours pour essampler les amantz marietz*, and other French verses, in order to remind Henry of England's cultural affiliations with France and to convince the monarch, especially through *In Praise of Peace*, to renew a longstanding but threatened peace treaty with the French.<sup>20</sup> It seems that Gower had both regal ceremonies and international diplomacy in mind when composing and compiling poems for Trentham in all three languages, poems that seem tailored for Henry's reading and show a special interest in poetic genre and musical allusion.<sup>21</sup> That 'Rex Celi Deus', a coronation poem in Latin, and the *Cinkante Balades*, verses deeply indebted to French poetic traditions, appear side by side in Trentham speaks to Gower's dual interest in invoking the rituals surrounding Henry's new kingship and warning the monarch against French wars. That both 'Rex Celi Deus' and the *Cinkante Balades* were written during the

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- 19 London, British Library, MS Additional 59495. Scholars believe the contents of the Trentham Manuscript were presented to Henry IV for his coronation, but because this manuscript is not an ornate copy, debate has continued for centuries as to whether it constitutes the actual gift or a copy from which the gift was made. Thomas Fairfax, who owned the manuscript in the seventeenth century, wrote on the first blank leaf that it was a coronation gift. John H. Fisher concurs with Fairfax's notation in *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 72. However, G. C. Macaulay, who surveyed all the Gower manuscripts known to the nineteenth century for his editions, thought Trentham to be a working copy. See *Complete Works*, 1, pp. lxxix–lxxxiii. More recently, R. F. Yeager concurs with Macaulay because of Trentham's plainness. See 'John Gower's French', in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), p. 145 and also 'Politics and the French Language in England during the Hundred Years' War: The Case of John Gower', in *Inscribing the Hundred Years' War in French and English Cultures*, ed. by Denise N. Baker (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 131–32.
- 20 Sebastian Sobecki, 'Ecce patet tensus: The Trentham Manuscript, *In Praise of Peace*, and John Gower's Autograph Hand', *Speculum*, 90.4 (October 2015), 925–59. In addition to reframing the purpose of Trentham, Sobecki offers valuable evidence for early ownership of the manuscript and the possibility of Gower's own scribal hand in the final poems.
- 21 Sobecki argues that Trentham was never in Henry's possession, that the manuscript stayed with Gower after Henry unexpectedly signed a peace treaty in 1400, and that it remained at St Mary Overie until it was acquired by William Sanders, Justice of the Peace, during his work to dissolve the priory under Henry VIII's orders. See Sobecki, 'Ecce patet tensus', pp. 925–32.

1390s as a compliment to the multilingual and sophisticated Lancastrian court invite their comparison.<sup>22</sup> By looking at these very different parts of the Trentham Manuscript together, we can investigate Gower's deployments of hymns and music in missive-like poetry that was addressed at one level to the same audience.

Let us examine the order of appearance of Gower's poems in the Trentham Manuscript to see how generic play with letters and song extends across his larger gift to Henry IV and how 'Rex Celi Deus' and the *Cinkante Balades* participate in the overall structure. The table of contents for the manuscript is as follows.

1. 'Electus Christi, pie Rex Henrice', an opening address to Henry IV in Latin.
2. *In Praise of Peace*, a Middle English poem exhorting Henry to rule in peace.
3. A Latin prose statement identifying Gower as the author of the previous 'carmen' and the next 'epistola'.
4. 'Rex Celi Deus', a Latin coronation poem.
5. A French dedication of the *Cinkante Balades* to Henry IV; two Latin dedication poems combining 'O Recolende' and 'H. aquile pullus'.
6. The *Cinkante Balades*, 54 French ballades.
7. 'Gentile Engleterre', verses to conclude the *Cinkante Balades*.
8. 'Ecce patet tensus', a Latin poem on Cupid's arrow.
9. The *Traitié pour esampler les amantz marietz*, an incomplete version of Gower's eighteen French ballades on marriage.

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22 Macaulay resisted dating the *Cinkante Balades*, since there is so little evidence for doing so, but admits that they seem aimed at Henry IV's court, which would place them in 1399. See *Complete Works*, 1, p. lxxii. Fisher, on the other hand, promoted the view espoused by Thomas Warton that the *Balades* are Gower's youthful compositions. Warton had believed that the *Cinkante Balades* were the dance songs that Gower confessed and rejected in the MO at ll. 27340–41. See Fisher, *John Gower*, pp. 73–74 and Thomas Warton, *History of English Poetry* (London: J. Dodsley, 1774), 1, p. 333. Another theory on dating hazards that Gower wrote the ballades throughout his life. See George Lyman Kittredge, *Date of Chaucer's Troilus* (London: Chaucer Society, 1909), p. 76. More recently, R. F. Yeager has written persuasively that the *Cinkante Balades* were composed as a compliment to the Lancastrian court, not as late as the accession but instead during the height of popularity for the *Livre de Cent Ballades*. See R. F. Yeager, 'John Gower's Audience: The Ballades', *Chaucer Review*, 40.1 (2005), 89–91. Linda Barney Burke returns to the theory that the CB were composed after the accession and posits that 'Gower presented his *Cinkante Balades* to the new kind in competition with [Christine de Pizan's famous *Cent Balades*], or as a consolation prize once [Christine] had declined to serve as an ornament to Henry's court'. See Linda Barney Burke, "'The Voice of One Crying': John Gower, Christine de Pizan, and the Tradition of Elijah the Prophet", in *Gower in Contexts: Scribal, Linguistic, Literary and Socio-historical Readings*, ed. by Laura Filardo-Llamas, Brian Gastle, and Marta Gutiérrez Rodríguez, special issue of *ES Revista de Filología Inglesa*, 33.1 (Valladolid: Publications of the University of Valladolid, 2012), 118.



10. 17 lines of 'Est amor', a Latin poem on Gower's marriage.
11. 12 lines of 'Quicquid homo scribat', a Latin poem in which Gower takes his leave of writing.

Arthur W. Bahr and Candace Barrington have discussed Trentham's structure in detail, Bahr addressing the manuscript's gestures toward the new monarch and Barrington offering provocative readings from both legal perspectives and disability studies.<sup>23</sup> While appreciating the subtlety of his reading, this chapter disagrees with many of Bahr's points about irony in Trentham. On the other hand, it corrects one of the failings in Gower studies noted by Barrington: the habit of disabling Gower's corpus by severing poems in different languages from each other, both in editions and criticism. In Trentham, poems in Latin, French, and Middle English are in dialogue with each other. It is even possible to posit a general narrative order, with *In Praise of Peace* seeking both domestic and international calm after the deposition of Richard II, 'Rex Celi Deus' celebrating the coronation, and the *Cinkante Balades* manifesting stylized exchanges between lovers such as there may be in Henry's court and perhaps figuring accord with France through this amity. The *Cinkante Balades* end by praising wedded love and invoking the Virgin, whose central position as a reader for the ballades will be discussed in Chapter Six — and they are followed by a characterization of Cupid and additional French ballades in the *Traitié* that focus more directly on matrimony. 'Est amor' narrows to a discussion of Gower's own marriage, and the final poem concludes both the manuscript and the author's career. This narrative curve dwells often on courtship and marriage, including England's love poem to Henry IV in 'Rex Celi Deus' and the expressions of various suitors in the *Cinkante Balades*, from those about to be married in the first five poems to those whose relationships end uncertainly, as in the remainder. The complicated history of writing music and love song that Butterfield so ably documents surfaces in Gower's composition of the *Cinkante Balades* and spills over into public adoration of God and king in 'Rex Celi Deus'.<sup>24</sup>

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- 23 Arthur W. Bahr, 'Reading Codicological Form in John Gower's Trentham Manuscript', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 33 (2011), 219–62; Candace Barrington, 'The Trentham Manuscript as Broken Prosthesis: Wholeness and Disability in Lancastrian England', *Accessus*, 1 (2013), <<http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/accessus/vol1/>>; Candace Barrington, 'The Spectral Advocate in John Gower's Trentham Manuscript', in *Theorizing Legal Personhood in Late Medieval England (Medieval Law and Its Practice)*, ed. by Andreea D. Boboc (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 94–118. See also Lynn Staley, *Languages of Power in the Age of Richard II* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), pp. 346–49.
  - 24 Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*. See also Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987). Huot provides powerful insights on the relationships among writing, lyric, and performance in French verse. William Calin points out that Gower's ballades differ from those in French by emphasizing marriage. See William Calin, *The French*

The sequencing of poems in the Trentham Manuscript displays a variety of formal and generic adaptations involving music, letter writing, exemplarity, and rituals of church and court. *In Praise of Peace* catalogues exemplars of good rule, calls itself a 'lettre', and offers a final stanza much like the envoys of the ballades;<sup>25</sup> many of its sentiments are repeated in the following missive 'Rex Celi Deus', which also has an envoy-like presentation structure in the end — and may have been intended for chanting as if part of a coronation liturgy. Gower clearly valued the envoy as a way to emphasize the genre and direct address in his poetry: envoys are attached to all of the *Cinkante Balades*, except two, and part of their function is to announce the generic identity of the poem. Through their envoys, the *Cinkante Balades* present ballades that may be letters (I, II, III, IIIa, XV, XVIII, XX, XXII, XXVI, XXVII, XXXIII, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XLIII) or a song (XXXV) — but not both. In contrast, the *Traitié* then separates the ballade form from the conventional connections to both sending and singing. It offers instead exempla of good rule (in love) more like *In Praise of Peace*. It is not my intention to treat Trentham's generic adaptations comprehensively in this chapter, but to highlight some of Gower's most innovative dealings with musicality and epistolarity in 'Rex Celi Deus' and the *Cinkante Balades*. This brief survey of the manuscript illustrates that generic manipulation of music and letters is one of the core principles of the compilation.

Since the Trentham manuscript was probably compiled in the process of making a gift that invokes Henry IV's coronation, it is interesting that the coronation ceremony itself is multi-generic, incorporating readings, direct address similar to that in epistles, and music. The *Liber regalis*, a fourth recension *ordo* that had been employed since Edward II's crowning in 1308, establishes an order for psalms, oaths, and hymns.<sup>26</sup> As Paul Binski remarks, '[M]edieval coronations were at once liturgically invariant, for that is what lent them their legitimating power, and contextually responsive, for that is what ensured their survival.'<sup>27</sup> Henry's response to his own context — the special need after the deposition of Richard to establish himself in the line of revered English kings and to ensure God's blessings — included the choice to be crowned on St Edward's Day, 13 October 1399 and anointed with a particularly sanctifying holy oil. According to

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*Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 381.

<sup>25</sup> *In Praise of Peace* declares itself a 'letter' in the penultimate stanza at l. 375.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets: Kingship and the Representation of Power 1200–1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 130–31. On coronation ceremonies, see also W. H. St John Hope, 'The King's Coronation Ornaments', *The Ancestor*, 1 (1902), 127–59 and especially Nigel Saul's extensive description of Richard II's coronation in *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 25–26.

<sup>27</sup> Binski, *Westminster Abbey*, p. 130.

Walsingham's *Historia*, Henry IV was sanctified with a phial of oil that Richard II had only recently discovered in The Tower, oil that the Virgin Mary was supposed to have bestowed upon Thomas Becket, who then hid it in Poitiers to be discovered by Henry's grandfather, Henry of Grosmont.<sup>28</sup> Through these gestures, Henry grounded his coronation in the cult of a national saint, whose vestments he would receive at the altar, and strengthened his ties to ruling biblical archetypes, since Christ emerges from the line of David, who, along with his son Solomon, undergoes processes of coronation that become paradigmatic for medieval Christian kings. Signalling the appropriateness of 'Rex Celi Deus' for a coronation, Gower similarly works to position Henry in a glorious history of biblical and English salvation.<sup>29</sup>

### 'Rex Celi Deus'<sup>30</sup>

In 'Rex Celi Deus', Gower forges an innovative conjunction of epistolary and musical conventions, situating his poetic address to Henry IV in liturgical practice.<sup>31</sup> 'Rex Celi Deus' is a poem of fifty-six lines written in 1399 to celebrate Henry IV's ascent to England's throne. So much of 'Rex Celi Deus' is cyclical and repeatable — a religious song about a king meant for singing about various kingships, and yet so much is grounded in the expectations of epistolary discourse to a particular audience: in this instance, Henry, his God, and his court. In this section of the chapter, I explain the effects of Gower's 'marriage' of *dictamen* and *musica* and

<sup>28</sup> Saul, *Richard II*, p. 423.

<sup>29</sup> Gower showed an interest in the power of the coronation oath in other poems. Richard Firth Green sees 'O Deus Immense' as a poem written to remind Richard II of his coronation oath and argues that *Confessio Amantis* 7, ll. 3078–83 expresses a similar intention. See Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 235. Similarly, 'H. aquile pullus' also mentions the coronation and the use of Marian holy oil.

<sup>30</sup> An earlier version of the 'Rex Celi Deus' section of this chapter was published as the following: Georgiana Donavin, "'Rex Celi Deus': John Gower's Heavenly Missive" in *Public Declarations: Essays on Medieval Rhetoric, Education, and Letters in Honour of Martin Camargo*, ed. by Georgiana Donavin and Denise Stodola (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 103–24.

<sup>31</sup> I have represented RCD as it appears in Macaulay's edition. More recently, R. F. Yeager has edited and translated the poem. See 'Rex Celi Deus' in *John Gower: The Minor Latin Works with In Praise of Peace*, ed. and trans. by R. F. Yeager, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series Online, University of Rochester, accessed August 8, 2021, <<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/rytxt7.htm>>. Although I have consulted Yeager's translation, I offer my own and the new interpretations of the poem it suggests throughout this essay. Scholars agree that the poem was written about the time of Henry IV's election on September 30, 1399: perhaps written under pressure between the election and the coronation on October 13 of the same year. See Yeager, 'Rex Celi Deus', fn. 1.

present my discovery of the master allusion in 'Rex Celi Deus' that makes these nuptials possible: the deployment in the poem's opening lines of the well-known hymn 'Celi Deus Sanctissime'.<sup>32</sup> The hymn renders 'Rex Celi Deus' an imitation of songs and responses occurring in the coronation ritual. Gower addresses Henry IV in a poetic missive that might be chanted in order to speak to the king directly about the historical moment, locate late fourteenth-century politics in the context of God's reign, remark upon Henry's participation in the cycles of continuing creation, and emphasize the coronation's liturgical nature.

As demonstrated in my translation of 'Rex Celi Deus' appended to this chapter, the poem begins with a prayer to the Father and Creator that marvels over God's work on the fourth day. God is the first principle and formal cause, whose mind-plans establish the laws governing the planets and whose Word brought forth creation.<sup>33</sup> After emphasizing God's reign over all, Gower transitions to Henry's rule and addresses him directly as '[p]ious king'.<sup>34</sup> Further on in this section, I will analyse the effects of this duplicate opening address — to both God and Henry. It was God's grace that brought Henry home to rule, Gower claims, just as the miseries of the previous reign had reached their culmination.<sup>35</sup> The second half of the poem dwells upon Gower's hopes that now God has chosen Henry as England's saviour, He might endow the English king with all good things — power, fame, a memorable progeny — and protect him from all evils — insidious counsel, tempting avarice, new rebellions. In the final six lines, featuring end rhyme to set them off as an epilogue and dedication, Gower presents himself as a new *magus*, 'kneeling' to offer England's political

32 'Caeli Deus Sanctissime', in *Analecta Hymnica*, ed. by Clemens Blume (Leipzig: Reisland, 1908), pp. 36–37. In the English Middle Ages 'caeli' might be rendered 'coili' or 'celi'. Since Gower chose 'celi' for the title of his poem, I am substituting the same word for Blume's 'caeli' in the hymn title. In any case, 'caeli' and 'celi' would both have been pronounced [čeli].

33 RCD, ll. 1–9.

34 RCD, l. 10.

35 RCD, ll. 11–25. Gower's support for the Lancastrian claim to the throne after the usurpation of Richard II has been much discussed. Nigel Saul distils and responds to two centuries of scholarship on the matter in 'John Gower: Prophet or Turncoat?' in *John Gower Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation and Tradition*, ed. by Elisabeth Dutton, with John Hines and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), pp. 85–97. I agree with Saul's argument that Gower's belief in kingly prerogative hewed very closely to Richard's — and to Giles of Rome's treatment of it in *De regimine principum* — but that the poet became disenchanted with the Ricardian reign upon realizing that although the king cast his majesty upon others, Richard failed to recognize another important teaching of Giles: that the king must rule himself. In 'Gower, Richard II, Henry of Derby, and the Business of Making Culture' *Speculum*, 75.4 (2000), 68–96, Lynn Staley argues that Gower's change of allegiance must be seen in a larger context of political events unfolding over the course of many years, rather than as a response to a discrete historical event. By the time of RCD's composition, of course, Richard had been deposed, and Gower seems to look forward to the new order he hoped that Henry IV would establish.

redeemer a gift of words that proclaim allegiance and a wish for the king's eternal salvation.<sup>36</sup>

While Gower characterizes the gift of 'Rex Celi Deus' as 'vota' and 'verba'<sup>37</sup> — 'vows, prayers, or wishes' and 'words' — the Latin rubric in Trentham calling the poem an 'epistola' and the history of the composition of 'Rex Celi Deus' shows that he considered the poem to be a letter, or to form part of a letter. Macaulay observed the similarity between 'Rex Celi Deus' and the concluding section of the epistolary *speculum* to Richard II from *Vox Clamantis* 6. 8–18A that we studied in the previous chapter.<sup>38</sup> According to David Carlson, in late, unauthorial manuscripts of the *Vox*, the *Epistola ad regem* concludes with a poem beginning in the same words providing the *incipit* for the praise under consideration here — 'Rex Celi Deus';<sup>39</sup> a head note indicates that the *Epistola*'s 'Rex Celi Deus' section was intended to complete the *speculum principum* and to directly address the king, who was, as we recall, the young Richard: 'Hic loquitur in fine istius Epistole, ubi pro statu regis devocius exorat, ut deus ipsius etatem iam floridam in omni prosperitate conservet [...]'. (Here in the end of the *Epistola*, where the devoted subject begs for the welfare of the king, Gower asks that God preserve the youthful years of his majesty in all prosperity).<sup>40</sup> When in 1399 Gower extrapolated twenty-one of the forty lines of the *Epistola*'s original epilogue for the independent poem 'Rex Celi Deus', he may have excised the larger epistolary context for the poem, but he continued to deploy rhetorical strategies for letter writing.<sup>41</sup> As we shall see, the first eight lines that the *Epistola*'s conclusion and 'Rex Celi Deus' share are important for a musical allusion, as well as for the rhetoric of missives.

Since the quality of the address to the receiver is an important consideration for the rhetoric of letter writing, scholars have wondered how Henry IV received phrases originally intended for the monarch whose throne he usurped and what Gower intended in refashioning so many Ricardian lines for Henry in the 1399 version of 'Rex Celi Deus'. 'Rex Celi Deus' is, of course, not the only instance in which Gower revised Ricardian poems for a Lancastrian audience. Perhaps the most famous revisions of this sort took place sometime after 1390 to the *Confessio Amantis*'s Prologue from which Gower excised a charming scene involving Richard's patronage and substituted a more straightforward dedication to Henry of

<sup>36</sup> RCD, l. 53.

<sup>37</sup> RCD, ll. 51, 55.

<sup>38</sup> Gower, *Works*, vol. 4, p. 416.

<sup>39</sup> David R. Carlson, 'Gower's Early Latin Poetry: Text-Genetic Hypotheses of an *Epistola ad regem* (ca. 1377–1380) from the Evidence of John Bale', *Mediaeval Studies*, 65 (2003), 295.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Carlson, 'Gower's Early Latin Poetry', p. 300.

<sup>41</sup> In the copy of RCD in the Appendix to this essay, I have marked with an asterisk the lines or partial lines that Gower extrapolated from the concluding poem of the *Epistola ad regem*.

Derby.<sup>42</sup> For a coherent reading of Gower's works, it is important to sort out the rhetorical strategies and effects of such revisions. On recycling the *Epistola ad regem*'s conclusion, Carlson remarks:

One might like to think that the irony implicit in readdressing to the new king monitory remarks formerly addressed to a deposed king — the gesture might be construed as a warning: as Richard, so Henry — may not have been beyond Gower's intention.<sup>43</sup>

Bahr has extended Carlson's observation on the potential irony in 'Rex Celi Deus' by analysing the poem's position in the Trentham Manuscript.<sup>44</sup> Employing codicology as an interpretive method, Bahr suggests that the praise in 'Rex Celi Deus' for Henry is undercut not only by the Ricardian lines in the poem, but also by the way in which Trentham's contents gradually retreat from fulsome addresses to the new Lancastrian lord. Whether or not Gower intended irony in such praise, as Yeager reminds us, the pressure to produce a celebratory poem between Henry's election on 30 September 1399 and the coronation on October 13 of the same year may have led Gower to deploy verses he had written before.<sup>45</sup>

I am arguing, however, that we need invoke neither the ironic turn nor the haste of circumstance to explain the repetition in 'Rex Celi Deus' of lines for both Ricardian and Henrician addresses. This is to deny neither that Gower was hurried nor that the ironic interpretation is a legitimate and interesting reader response. However, it is to say that the combination of letter-writing practices aimed at a particular king, the context of the coronation, and the allusion to 'Celi Deus Sanctissime', a Gregorian chant, generates a rhetoric that is both timely and timeless, in other words a liturgical rhetoric, and such liturgies apply without irony or compromise

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42 Both Macaulay's and Peck's editions of the *Confessio* feature the Lancastrian Prologue in the main page of the text and the Ricardian Prologue below. On the manuscript history and aesthetic value of both prologues, see especially Dhira B. Mahoney, 'Gower's Two Prologues to *Confessio Amantis*' in *Re-Visioning Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Asheville, NC: Pegasus, 1998), pp. 17–37. Peter Nicholson has published a number of short essays in which he posits the dates and purposes of Gower's CA revisions. For his early views, see Peter Nicholson, 'Gower's Revisions in the *Confessio Amantis*', *The Chaucer Review*, 19 (1984), 123–43; Peter Nicholson, 'The Dedications of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', *Mediaevalia*, 10 (1984), 159–80, and Peter Nicholson, 'Poet and Scribe in the Manuscripts of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', in *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987), pp. 130–42. More recently, Nicholson has revised his view of the extent to which Gower participated in textual revisions. See Peter Nicholson, 'Gower's Manuscript of the "Confessio Amantis"', in *The Medieval Python: The Purposive and Provocative Work of Terry Jones*, ed. by R. F. Yeager and Toshiyuki Takamiya (New York: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 75–86.

43 Carlson, 'Gower's Early Latin Poetry', p. 304. See also Staley, *Languages of Power*, pp. 348–49.

44 Bahr, 'Reading Codicological Form', pp. 219–62.

45 Yeager, ed., 'Rex Celi Deus', n. RCD.

to all believing kings. Although Gower certainly excised or diminished references to Richard II in his poetry during turbulent cycles of the young king's reign, this practice does not necessarily indicate an increasing cynicism about regal power or undue wariness of how Henry might use it. Rather, through epistolary conventions, Gower impresses upon Henry their place in providential history and the monarch's obligations to God; through an allusion to the hymn 'Celi Deus Sanctissime', Gower contextualizes the historical moment in eternity and invokes a liturgy sanctioning Henry's government. Since 'Rex Celi Deus' was composed around the time of Henry's coronation — itself a liturgy — what we have in this poem is neither a dashed-off effort nor a sly undermining of the new king, but rather a repeated use of language that might be sung for a variety of kings, and yet verses aimed at this particular king who must honour his own position in historical and cosmic cycles.<sup>46</sup>

'Rex Celi Deus' is addressed to the monarch, but first it is directed to God. As we consider the epistolary structure of 'Rex Celi Deus', we find that the salutation is the most complicated and rhetorically manipulated part. In the poem's opening words, 'Rex celi deus' (King, God of heaven), Gower's missive seems to begin with a prayerful salutation to God.<sup>47</sup> The completion of the opening appositive phrase, however, 'et dominus', rounding out the parenthetical description's full meaning of 'God and Lord of heaven', alerts us that Gower is not employing the vocative of direct address to his Creator. If Gower were speaking straightforwardly to God, he would have finished the phrase with 'et domine', but instead he uses

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46 I agree with Jenni Nuttall that critics characterizing the work of late fourteenth-century authors who saw the transition of power to the Lancastrians as either implicitly rebellious or slavishly supportive offer too simplistic an analysis of a sophisticated political literature. See Jenni Nuttall, *The Creation of Lancastrian Kingship: Literature, Language and Politics in Late Medieval England*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 67 (Cambridge: Cambridge Up, 2007). Nuttall concludes: 'Early Lancastrian authors employed languages and idioms which were in the process of escaping from the control of their originators. They adopted the linguistic suggestions and propositions of royal authority, but made more ambiguous or unexpected use of them, transforming these discourses themselves into the subject of Lancastrian literature. They are not for or against the Lancastrian Crown but rather in conversation with it' (5). In this chapter I show that through the conventions of epistolary rhetoric and hymn-singing, Gower imposes themes of timeliness and timelessness onto Lancastrian propaganda and places his poem in a liturgical context. In this way, I am adding specific support to Nuttall's general argument.

47 Throughout this chapter I will quote my own English translation of RCD. Please see the Appendix for a side-by-side presentation of the Latin poem and my translation. My rendering of the first line differs from Macaulay's and Yeager's reading of it. Both editors see 'Rex celi' and 'deus et dominus' as syntactical units (thus Yeager's translation 'King of Heaven, God and master') while I see 'celi deus et dominus' as a single appositive phrase reflecting upon 'Rex'. My reading highlights Gower's allusion to the hymn 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' by preserving 'celi deus' as a syntactical unit and sets off 'Rex' as a single word, since the poem emphasizes kingship.

the nominative case and follows with pronouns and verb conjugations for the third person singular. Therefore, 'Rex Celi Deus' opens with worshipful language about God spoken to another. Finally, by the tenth line and the conclusion of a long period, Gower arrives at the audience for such worshipful language and the true salutation — 'Rex pie' (pious king) — speaking to Henry openly in the vocative.<sup>48</sup> Both heavenly and earthly rulers are 'Rex', and the brief uncertainty over which one constitutes the audience for the poem is purposeful. The double positioning of 'Rex' in heavenly and earthly realms establishes the poem's master comparison between divine and human rulers: God has made Henry like Himself for the good of England; Henry is therefore obligated to serve God in this capacity; Henry, as I shall demonstrate, is in fact an English Christ figure.

The brevity of the salutation to Henry as simply 'Rex pie' underscores the comparison between divine and human rulers. In contrast to the standard medieval epistolary salutation that names both the sender and the recipient of the letter in an order and style elaborately indicating the place of each in the social hierarchy, Gower addresses Henry with only a single complimentary adjective and mostly postpones the discussion of his own authorial identity. As Martin Camargo puts it, in common practice 'the *salutatio* [...] acknowledged in very precise terms and in fairly complex ways a relationship of superiority, inferiority, or equality with the absent person addressed'.<sup>49</sup> By injecting himself only slightly in the *salutatio* with the verb 'queso' (I pray), however, Gower stands out of the way while shining a light on the bond between Henry and God. With 'queso', Gower enters the poem only long enough to resolve the tension concerning his point of view in the salutation. The concluding line of the period and the salutation proper — 'Te que tuum regnum, Rex pie, queso regat' (Pious king, I pray [God] may rule your reign) — sorts out the author's intention, the addressee, and the approach to prayer in this poem. It is only in the final six lines, however, set off by end rhyme as a dedication in imitation of a ballade's envoy, that Gower characterizes his relationship with his regal reader and completes the salutation. This delay in completing the salutation is a feature that Camargo has noted in the *Cinkante Balades*, where the poet saves introductory matter for the envoy.<sup>50</sup> By means of this postponement, the poems can conclude by defining the speaker's

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48 Michael Kuczynski discusses Gower's use of the phrase 'Rex pie' or 'pie Rex' to describe both Richard II and Henry IV. The first ten lines of RCD occur in both the Ricardian *Epistola*, discussed earlier, and the independent Lancastrian poem that is the centrepiece of this chapter section. Kuczynski argues that through this phrase Gower compares his monarchs to 'pius Aeneas' and establishes himself as a new Virgil praising a new Augustus. See Michael Kuczynski, 'Gower's Virgil', in *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), pp. 161–87.

49 Camargo, *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle*, p. 10.

50 Camargo, *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle*, p. 41.



status with the audience and offering themselves as a witness to personal connection, even during times of absence or displeasure. In the final lines of 'Rex Celi Deus', to clarify his position with his regent, Gower offers a self-portrait: the poet is 'a poor man' on bended knee, offering his gift of words.<sup>51</sup> The belated, though appropriate, self-identifying image provides a substitute for the poet's absence; whether Gower delivered 'Rex Celi Deus' in person, sent it through a messenger, or heard of its performance in court, the self-portrait recreates a scene of the poet's epistolary speech wherever it is spoken. When instructed in the *ars dictaminis*, Gower would have learned that the salutation should render the document a substitute for the self and that the whole letter should imitate a Ciceronian oration, since it would be read, recited, or paraphrased aloud.<sup>52</sup>

Putting aside the complications of the salutation to Henry, we find that the rest of 'Rex Celi Deus' follows the classic structure for the medieval letter, a simplified version of the Ciceronian oration. The columns below outline the line numbers and subject matters corresponding to the different parts of a medieval missive.

Lines 1 and 10,	The seeming and actual address: to God and then to Henry
Lines 1–10, the <i>Exordium</i>	Fosters Henry's goodwill and interest through the use of scriptural authority
Lines 11–25a, the <i>Narratio</i>	Describes and defends Henry's return from exile and accession to the throne
Lines 25b–50, the <i>Petitio</i>	Expresses hopes that God may glorify and protect Henry's reign
Lines 51–56, the <i>Conclusio</i> / Return to the <i>Salutatio</i> /Final <i>Petitio</i>	Offers Gower's gift of words and his desire for Henry's salvation

In the *exordium*, or *captatio benevolentiae*, Gower secures his king's attention with references to God's mighty works on the fourth day of creation. Then, God ruled over time, seasons, and the motions of earth, just as contemporaneously, He rules the progress of history and Henry's position in it. Such an *exordium* provided the keynote to a letter in the *dictatores'* teachings; as Camargo explains it,

the *captatio benevolentiae* served an all-important first premise in an epistolary syllogism: for it one chose a proverb, *exemplum*, or *auctoritas* (scriptural or secular) that compelled wide-spread

<sup>51</sup> RCD, ll. 53–4.

<sup>52</sup> Camargo, *Ars Dictaminis*, p. 19.

assent to a given course of action in given circumstances.

If one chose well, it was then possible to show, in the *narratio*, that the present case belonged to a class of circumstances so specified and to conclude, in the *petitio*, that the desired course of action was both reasonable and sanctioned by authority.<sup>53</sup>

For the *exordium* of 'Rex Celi Deus', Gower chose the scriptural authority of Genesis to prove God's power to make manifest His laws in the universe — on the fourth day and in Henry's day. From that premise, Gower's *narratio* of Henry's arrival and victory in England illustrates the continuance of God's guidance, of the divine intention to provide relief to the suffering kingdom, while Gower's *petitio* prays for the maintenance of divine support. Seeking protection and peace from God in the petition, rather than a favour from Henry, the poet demonstrates a further purpose for the salutation's double address. Just as the opening of the poem seems to pray to God on the way to addressing Henry, the long ending section addresses Henry while praying that God might shower all good things on the king's reign. As the *conclusio* makes the final petition for the king's salvation, provides a dedication to Henry IV, and completes the *salutatio* by explaining the author's relationship to the letter's addressee, Gower ends 'Rex Celi Deus' with the subject of the efficacy of words. If in the poem's and the earth's beginning the 'Word brought created things to be', in the poem's end words endow a poor man with a gift suited for a king.<sup>54</sup> As we saw in Chapter One, the might of the Word is a key component of Gower's rhetorical theory. While 'Rex Celi Deus' follows a logical and linear structure taught in the *artes dictandi*, it also has a circular aspect revolving around the comparison between God's creative Word and the poet's expression of hope for England's future.

Rotating with this circular aspect, we return to the beginning of 'Rex Celi Deus' for a deeper inspection of the poem's rhetoric. In linking the creative Word of the opening prayer with the offering of words in the concluding dedication, we gather up the linear epistolary structure into a circlet corresponding to the poem's opening discussion of earth's 'orb'.<sup>55</sup> The 'stable sway' of the 'orb' and the movements of the sun and planets through which, Gower believed, God established time continue to revolve and thus to create the glorious history in which Henry triumphs.<sup>56</sup> They also create the music of the spheres, a concept advanced by Pythagoras

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<sup>53</sup> Camargo, *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle*, p. 10.

<sup>54</sup> RCD, l. 7.

<sup>55</sup> RCD, l. 5.

<sup>56</sup> RCD, ll. 1–5.

and promulgated by Plato in the *Timaeus*.<sup>57</sup> The opening image of 'Rex Celi Deus' not only invokes music, but is itself musical as it refashions the well-known hymn 'Celi Deus Sanctissime'. The beginning prayer that initially seems to address the Lord forms a part of a chant. Like Gower's self-portrait at the end of the poem, the chant emphasizes an oral delivery of this heavenly missive, in this instance through the deployment of song.

So far in our discussion of 'Rex Celi Deus' we have dwelled upon the larger contexts and structures that make the poem a missive, but we will now consider the tuneful aspect of 'Rex Celi Deus' and the impact of song on its dictaminal rhetoric. As Camargo has demonstrated in discussing Gower's use of generic and epistolary labels for the *Cinkante Balades* and as we have just seen in evaluating the epistolary organization of 'Rex Celi Deus', Gower applied dictaminal teachings to verse, and he experimented in this poem with a collusion between letter writing and chanting.<sup>58</sup> While the *artes dictandi* taught *cursus*, a method for the rhythmical composition of prose, it is poetry — not prose — that can claim *musica* as an ally. By appropriating the popular hymn 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' in the opening eight lines of 'Rex Celi Deus', Gower underscores the missive's verse form (mostly unrhymed elegaic distichs), emphasizes the potential oral delivery by chanting, aligns his voice with an entire populace singing all together,<sup>59</sup> and establishes a liturgical setting for his gift to Henry.

Gower draws attention to his musical allusion in the first phrase of his poem, which inserts the word 'Rex' in front of the hymn's easily recognized title 'Celi Deus', and thereby foreshadows a discussion of divine intervention with a king and characterizes God as the highest King. In the beginning of the poem, God's Word establishes time and history while Gower's use of 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' celebrates Henry's time and historical moment with the liturgical practice of worshipful singing. Additionally, the motif of time is especially appropriate for a coronation poem because the ritual establishes a new era, a period designated 'in regno Henrici quarti'. We have noted before that Gower wrote the words 'Rex Celi Deus' and the first eight lines of the eponymous poem, with their adaptation of 'Celi Deus Sanctissime', first for Richard II and later excised these verses for the independent poem for Henry IV around the time of the latter's coronation. It is the liturgical invitation of the hymn that makes these repeated lines appropriate for both kings: the language and song of the coronation mass were to be performed similarly for both.<sup>60</sup> Gower implies

57 Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, Internet Classics Archive, <<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html>>. 20 August 20 2010.

58 Camargo, *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle*, pp. 35–45.

59 RCD, l. 40.

60 See the discussion of coronations above in the section on the Trentham Manuscript.

English coronation liturgies have followed a traditional practice for centuries: The monarch

in his deployment of 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' and the repetition of lines for different regal contexts that the celebration and oaths written for each new king do not substantially change: it is God's support of the king's fealty that makes the difference. By connecting a chant to epistolary structure, Gower can sing of God's power to support, create a spiritual atmosphere inducing the new king's fealty, and build a tonal bridge between the prayer-like *exordium* and the entreaties to God in the *petitio*.

We now turn to the hymn 'Celi Deus Sanctissime', copied and translated as an appendix to this chapter. 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' is a Gregorian chant that is included in the Sarum hymnal as part of a cycle of hymns about creation for vespers. In the high and late Middle Ages, it was sung on Wednesdays, and continued to be used through the reign of Edward VI and to be placed in The Book of Common Prayer.<sup>61</sup> In other words, everyone would have known this hymn. The allusion to 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' manifests itself most noticeably in the first eight lines of Gower's poem, which happen also to be the longest block of repeated material from the unauthorial conclusion to the *Epistola ad regem*. In this way, advice to a king, whether Richard II or Henry IV, is suffused with music. While the allusion to 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' surfaces most strongly in the first eight lines, themes from the vespers chant continue to resonate throughout Gower's independent poem to Henry IV. The first three stanzas of the hymn celebrate heavenly light, the order of the planets, and the cycles of time; they provide the matter for Gower's celebration of God's acts on the fourth day. As a component of the epistolary structure of 'Rex Celi Deus', the substance of these three stanzas occupies the *exordium*, and through references to Genesis 1. 14–19, offers the compelling scriptural authority that is necessary to 'capture the benevolence' of the hearer. Like 'Celi Deus Sanctissime', Gower's poem repeats the relative pronoun 'qui' (who) to

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processes into Westminster Abbey, swears an oath to the people, is anointed with holy oil and crowned, receives the regalia, and accepts homage. For a detailed description of Richard's coronation, see Saul, *Richard II*, p. 25. Although he innovated by donning a closed crown, more like an imperial ruler, and by being anointed with holy oil supposedly delivered to Thomas Becket by the Virgin, Henry IV largely observed the *Liber regalis*. See W. H. Bliss, ed., *Liber Regalis* (London: Roxburghe, 2012).

- 61 For a discussion of the origins and transmission of 'Celi Deus Sanctissime', see the following articles by Ruth Ellis Messenger: 'Hymns and Sequences of the Sarum Use: An Approach to the Study of Medieval Hymnology', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 59 (1928), 99–129; 'Whence the Ninth Century Hymnal?' *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 69 (1938), 459–63; 'The Mozarabic Hymnal', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 75 (1944), 110–11. See also Michael Martin, 'Caeli Deus sanctissime', <<http://www.precelatinae.org/thesaurus/Hymni/CaeliDeus.html>>, accessed 12 August 2021. In the edition and translation of 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' at the end of this chapter, there are four stanzas included for the hymn, whereas Protestant and more modern versions of the song include five.

underline God as the authority over all cosmic action, spinning orbits and casting divine illumination. Infusing his narrative of creation on the fourth day with philosophical concepts, Gower substitutes the hymn's emphasis on the spread of heaven's 'fiery brilliance' for a stress on the perfection of the spheres, the Prime Mover, and formal causation. Gower invests 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' with the Platonic belief expressed in the *Timaeus* that God constructs a circular universe representing divine perfection and with the Aristotelian construct of *primum mobile*. As noted before, Gower often infuses his poetry with Aristotelian learning, whether by refashioning the matter that the Philosopher was believed to have taught to Alexander in the *Confessio Amantis*, Book 7, privileging statements of proof in the plain style for a Gowerian theory of rhetoric, or in adapting Aristotle's narrative voice in the *Epistola ad regem*. With its praises for creation melded with classical references, the refashioned hymn in 'Rex Celi Deus' sings the 'central conception of medieval cosmography', as described by Stephen H. Rigby, 'the claim that the universe was a material expression of an idea which had previously existed in the mind of God.'<sup>62</sup> In both the hymn and Gower's poem, we see attention to the creative Word that we have noted before, as the light or the divine intentions manifest themselves *in verbo*. In 'Celi Deus Sanctissime', God gives his 'sign'; in 'Rex Celi Deus', the 'Word [brings] created things to be.'<sup>63</sup>

The final stanza of 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' epitomizes the *narratio* and *petitio* of Gower's poem. Asking God to '[i]lluminate the heart of all humanity', the hymn's final stanza begins by suggesting a comparison between the Lord's casting of light to order the heavens and his continued guidance in the lives of mortals by illuminating souls and separating them from spiritual darkness.<sup>64</sup> In the *narratio* of 'Rex Celi Deus', describing the history of Henry's triumph, Gower dramatizes how God became a guiding light in Henry's heart and inspired Henry to return home from exile to raise up the English nation. Gower depicts Henry's homecoming as a shift from night to day, as a corollary to the divine division between darkness and dawn: 'While Death hid in shadows from your brilliance, / Bright Life resurrected that which rules realms', the poet declares.<sup>65</sup> In his intervention in Henry's life, God continues the work of creation, and in responding to his vocation, Henry becomes England's salvation, a Christ figure. Both the poem and the hymn position themselves amidst God's mighty works, since 'Celi Deus Sanctissime', the third hymn in the series of chants about creation, is chanted on Wednesday, the middle point in the seven days

62 Stephen H. Rigby, *Wisdom and Chivalry: Chaucer's Knight's Tale and Medieval Political Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 239.

63 'Celi Deus Sanctissime', l. 12; RCD, l. 7.

64 'Celi Deus Sanctissime', l. 30.

65 RCD, ll. 13 and 17–18.

of divine genesis, and 'Rex Celi Deus' captures a transition in English salvation history. In the *narratio* of Gower's poem, Henry IV compares with Jesus, the theological fulcrum who repositioned Judeo-Christian history and law, as the new king participates with the Creator in mighty and salvific works and overturns the oppressions of Richard's reign. While in Galatians 4. 4–5, Jesus comes 'in the fullness of time', Henry of Lancaster, according to 'Rex Celi Deus', arrives at the peak of England's need and redirects a tragic English past into a triumphal future, a failing system of English governance to a haven of protection. Through Henry, Gower claims, 'we praise Christ', and it is Henry's 'kighthood', like Jesus's harrowing of hell, that releases the people from 'every heavy evil'.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, Henry's homecoming from exile is characterized as an 'adventus', and just as Jesus rose from the tomb, the new Lancastrian lord raises others from 'the depth'.<sup>67</sup> Figuring Henry as Christ and flooding the new king with lights that the Creator has cast about him in the *narratio* of 'Rex Celi Deus', Gower develops the first line of the final stanza of 'Celi Deus Sanctissime': 'Illumina cor hominum' (Illuminate the heart of all humanity).

The *narratio* of Gower's missive, developing the first line of the final stanza of 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' and typifying Henry as Christ, forms some of the new matter for 'Rex Celi Deus' which is not imported from the *Epistola ad regem*'s conclusion in the unauthorized *Vox* and, as the narration of circumstances explaining his rise to the throne, offers content most germane and appealing to Henry. The letter's structure moves, then, from the chanting of a widely appealing scriptural authority to a specific, though biblically typified, history and then outward to petitions that both glorify God and praise Henry. In the *petitio* Gower expresses hope that God will keep Henry from sin, banish evil council, uplift the oppressed, and offer other blessings. The final line of 'Rex Celi Deus', raising the *conclusio* to its climax, delivers the ultimate petition that Henry might achieve eternal salvation. Through the *petitio* the poet expresses his twin aims of everlasting peace for Henry's soul and political peace for England. Gower's petitions for Lancastrian success mirror the last three lines of the final stanza of 'Celi Deus Sanctissime': 'Wipe away impurities of the mind / Release the chain of guilt, / Dislodge the mass of crimes'. As the structure of 'Rex Celi Deus' proceeds from a chant about creation to salvation history to prayerful petitions, it mimics a liturgy that offers hymns, readings from Judeo-Christian traditions, and prayerful responses.

By weaving the content of a hymn through his heavenly missive, Gower stands as cantor, invoking the divine presence in the *exordium*, focusing on his regal audience in the *narratio*, and inviting the entire English congregation to sing during the *petitio*. 'May happy England all together

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66 RCD, ll. 21, 15, 16.

67 RCD, ll. 13, 17.

sing,' he calls out amidst his petitions.<sup>68</sup> In 'Rex Celi Deus' rousing lyrics of God's creation and Henry's heroic place in it ring out, as the people sing 'in gestis', about the deeds, or the 'gestes', of the strong Christ-like king.<sup>69</sup> By emphasizing the joyousness of all people in singing at the coronation, Gower once again merges notarial structures with music, since the 'Sentence of Deposition' that justified Henry's coronation emphasizes the happy faces of all participants: Richard II, Henry, and the people all receiving the news of political reversal 'vultu hilari et benigno respiciens' (with happy face and benign aspect).<sup>70</sup> Although Malte Urban may be right that Gower sometimes privileges an individual's silent reading, here the new king amidst a congregation hears a chant that binds all present, or imagined to be present.<sup>71</sup> Through song, Gower joins his own voice with that of all the people, and in order to underscore univocality, he has deployed with 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' a syllabic chant, one with a single tone for each syllable, to be sung in unison. Plainchant, which is sung without harmonies or musical accompaniment, is the musical equivalent of the plain style, imitated in all languages by Gower, in which straightforward lines deliver the rhetorically unembellished truth. Plainchant also enables Gower's attempt in 'Rex Celi Deus' and elsewhere to write from the *vox populi* / *vox dei*, a biblical construction that offers the people's voice as an expression of God's will and especially recalls the gathering at Pentecost during which the disciples erupted with the 'good news' in many tongues. Matthew Giancarlo has connected Gower's utterances as *vox populi* to the poet's desire to appropriate a parliamentary voice, to articulate matters of English political consensus.<sup>72</sup> By singing of Henry's 'gestes' in 'Rex Celi Deus', the people support plainchant melody with a genre of heroic verse that was also conveyed in simple melodies.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the kinds of heroic or ecclesiastical song to which the poem makes reference concord with Gower's elocutionary ideal of plainness and serve to move the populace's emotions toward adoration of their new king. In 'Rex Celi Deus' Gower harnesses a Pentecostal fervour and solidifies tenuous political agreements (especially tenuous, perhaps, when they refer to a usurpation) through a

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68 RCD, l. 40.

69 RCD, l. 40.

70 See Carlson, 'The Deposition of Richard II', pp. 901–02.

71 Malte Urban, *Fragments: Past and Present in Chaucer and Gower* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 73–76.

72 Matthew Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 51.

73 There is not widespread agreement about how the *chansons de geste* were performed. By presuming that Gower was making reference to a genre of heroic song that was often performed with simple instrumentation and melody that could be compared to a Gregorian chant, I am following the work of Linda Marie Zaerr. See, for instance, Linda Marie Zaerr, *Performance and the Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012).

tight epistolary structure and a liturgical context. When all sing together, English voices ring in common purpose.

If Gower's poetic voice in 'Rex Celi Deus' is like that of a cantor, the liturgy to which he alludes is the coronation. 'Rex Celi Deus' gestures in a number of ways to the coronation ceremony: the opening chant establishes a spiritual atmosphere akin to what the king would have felt upon entering Westminster Abbey with the choir singing Psalm 122; references to the orb, sceptre, and crown invoke the ceremony's investments; mentions of mutual support between the king and people reflect mutual oaths offered at the coronation; and the larger message of the poem claiming God's reign as the foundation for the king's is the main point of the coronation liturgy.<sup>74</sup> By opening 'Rex Celi Deus' with a refashioned Gregorian chant, inviting all England to sing along, and attaching these moments of song to an epistolary structure, Gower can celebrate God's sanctioning of the new king, include the people in this blessed event, and directly address the new king. The overall effect of 'Rex Celi Deus', then, is of language and music both representing eternal cycles and concentrating on a particular moment within them. The coronation of Henry IV to which the poem looks, like any liturgy, focuses on God's blessings from heaven, while at the same time speaks directly to the blessed.

In the final line of 'Rex Celi Deus' — 'Your kingship o'er, may heavn's Kingdom be yours' — Gower entreats God for the ultimate blessing for his sovereign in an expression that encapsulates the poem's blended dictaminal and musical rhetoric. The final line might be spoken directly to Henry IV or chanted in a worshipful attitude; it offers a petition both favourable to the regal audience and applicable to many rulers; it addresses Henry in his own time and sings of the hierarchy governing monarchs in all times. The final line underscores the point that when Henry's reign is over, God's Kingdom will continue to protect and guide the movements of creation as they are described in both 'Celi Deus Sanctissime' and Gower's poem. Gower appropriates the Gregorian chant so that all standing amidst divine constructions of time, whether in the choir singing about creation's fourth day for vespers or at Henry IV's coronation celebrating a pivotal political moment at the turn of the fifteenth century, can lend a voice to praise and express hope for England's Lancastrian saviour. Although the poet's desire for such English univocality was not realized, the rhetoric he constructed for 'Rex Celi Deus', employing both epistolary structures and the intoning of a hymn, ensures that his message of hope was delivered directly to Henry and that his song would replay through generations.

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74 RCD, ll. 5 and 40–56.



## The *Cinkante Balades*

By placing the *Cinkante Balades* and their dedicatory verses to Henry IV immediately after 'Rex Celi Deus' in Trentham, Gower encourages comparisons between the generic manoeuvres in these adjoining parts. While in 'Rex Celi Deus' epistolarity and song collude to bind king, congregation, and poet, in the *Cinkante Balades* none of the poems designated as 'lettres' alludes to music; the disjunction of letter writing from singing underscores the separation of lovers in these poems until all are brought into accord through a *pax Henrici* and the Virgin Mary's enduring affection. Chapter Six amplifies on the meaning of the *Cinkante Balades*' Marian conclusion; here we will concentrate on Gower's multifaceted experiments with epistolary rhetoric: his reversal of expectations (established by 'Rex Celi Deus') for a tuneful letter; his declaration — in violation of French poetic practice — that fourteen of the ballades are letters; his manipulation of dictaminal form in the ballades designated 'lettres'; his minimization of musical references, even though musical scores regularly accompany ballades; and his almost complete removal of the otherwise omnipresent balladeer-crooner from the scene, an exception being a solitary song, a single Valentine's Day poem labelled 'chançoun' (XXXV).<sup>75</sup> Through these generic innovations, Gower makes the *Cinkante Balades* an inverse mirror of 'Rex Celi Deus', which combines letter and song to effect national unity. In contrast, in the *Cinkante Balades* the disjunction of missive and music threatens a personal breakdown for at least two lovers in the ballade cycle whose separation cannot be remediated even by sweet musical strains.<sup>76</sup> These suffer an emotional collapse until comforted by a king or succoured by the Virgin Mother.

In Trentham's transition from 'Rex Celi Deus' to the *Cinkante Balades* the church music of the coronation ceases as Henry IV begins his rule, supported by both God and people. Dedication I to the *Cinkante Balades*, a French ballade and the first of three multilingual verse prefaces, refers to the coronation in the past, offering the poetic collection to Henry 'now that [he has received] the crown.'<sup>77</sup> The movement from ecclesiastical to lay worlds is implied as Gower represents a king fresh from celestial blessings and entering his governing circles. Dedication I speaks to Henry

75 Emphasizing the textuality of the CB, Peter Nicholson makes a similar point that '[n]one of Gower's ballades is just a song [...]'. See Peter Nicholson, 'Writing the *Cinkante Balades*', in *John Gower: Others and the Self*, ed. by Russell A. Peck and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), p. 318.

76 On the theme of separation in the CB, see William Calin, 'John Gower's Continuity in the Tradition of French Fin' Amour', *Medievalia*, 16 (1993 [for 1990]), 94. Calin notes that ballades II, VII, VIII, IX, XXV, XXVIII, and XXXVIII in particular dwell upon the common topos of the lovers' separation.

77 CB, Dedication I, l. 17.

of his '[p]ité, prouesse, humblesse, [et] honour roial', regal gifts derived from trust in God and supported by 'providence q'est celestial', such gifts that allow the king to receive secular 'counsel' such as Gower's 'that is both good and wise'.<sup>78</sup> While the hymn-singing fades, praises of the king in an epistolary format without references to song persist throughout the dedicatory verses. When the ballade cycle begins, the emphasis of 'Rex Celi Deus' on hymnody will give way to secular literary trends. Yeager explains that, as a poetic present to a recently enthroned king, the *Cinkante Balades* imitate the type of ballade fashionable in French courts and familiar to Henry; the poems complimented the new king with a courtly sequence similar to *au courant* continental writing.<sup>79</sup> Gesturing toward chic literary style, Dedication I promises ballades where the flowers of discourse reside, and its conclusion, an envoy transitioning into a second dedication in Latin, emphasizes the 'perfit langage' that is suited to a king.<sup>80</sup> The overall effect of Dedication I is that of an ornate bridge between major sections of the Trentham Manuscript: between church and court settings, between Latin and French, between communal song and textual addresses to individuals.

From there, Gower launches a set of fifteen verses combining and truncating two Latin poems that Macaulay has published as separate entities — 'O recolende' and 'H. aquile pullus' — before proceeding to a final dedication to Henry in French. Constant code switching between the dedication poems and throughout the manuscript lauds the linguistic sophistication

78 CB, Dedication I, ll. 1, 3, and 13. Although I am consulting R. F. Yeager's translations of the ballades, I am offering my own versions. See R. F. Yeager, ed. and trans., *John Gower, Cinkante Balades*, TEAMS Middle English Text Series Online, <<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/yrfgct.htm>>, accessed July 4, 2021.

79 Yeager, 'John Gower's Audience', pp. 82–86. According to Yeager, Gower approximates the widely circulating French collection, the *Livre du Cent Ballades*, and deploys innovations in form and delivery developed by Deschamps. Yeager notes the possibility that Gower had already presented the *Cinkante Balades* to Henry when he was still 'Derby', although currently the *Cinkante Balades* exist in only a single copy, the Trentham Manuscript under study here. See Yeager, 'John Gower's Audience', p. 89. Ardis Butterfield, on the other hand, ties Gower's linguistic and literary experimentation with the ballades to Machaut. She writes: 'My hunch — and I can put it no more strongly, because how would one have 'evidence' for it? — is that the *Voir Dit* inspires [Gower] to work at creating fresh forms for lyric language that involve working with the metaformal potential of the envoy'. See Ardis Butterfield, 'Afterwords: Forms of Death', *Exemplaria*, 27.1–2 (Spring / Summer 2015), 178. On connections between political events and the composition of Gower's French verse, see Yeager, 'Politics and the French Language', pp. 127–57. As for the quality of language in Gower's gift to Henry, Jonathan Hsy suggests, based on an envoy and gloss in the *Traitié*, that Gower is not comfortable with his command of French. See Jonathan Hsy, *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism, and Medieval Literature* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), pp. 92–94. I regard Gower's apologies for his French in the *Traitié*, however, as yet another example of the *humility topos*.

80 CB Dedication I, l. 19: *Ore en balade, u sont les ditz floriz*; CB Dedication I, l. 23.

of the Lancastrian court. The Latin dedicatory verses double back toward the coronation allusions in 'Rex Celi Deus' by describing Henry IV as a saviour and biblical type (as a Moses figure who leads the English 'from Pharaoh') and by mentioning the special oil with which Henry was anointed.<sup>81</sup> To connect Henry's heavenly and earthly roles, the Latin verses deploy avian symbology: Henry is declared an eagle and a son of an eagle, an identity that aligns him with John of Patmos (the eagle among the Evangelists) and establishes the king's superiority in creation's hierarchy.<sup>82</sup> Like the parliament of fowls that the narrator attends on Valentine's Day in *Balades XXXV*, Henry the eagle, according to the second dedication in French, is enjoined to live in 'bon amour', in happiness and all amity with his kingdom.<sup>83</sup> The Trentham Manuscript is badly damaged where the Latin verses conclude and the final dedication in French begins, but the French lines that remain praise Henry's blessed qualities and declare them the source of protection and goodwill. As the multilingual dedications link 'Rex Celi Deus' and the *Cinkante Balades* in Trentham, Gower continues to emphasize providence, love, and governance, whether that love derive from the creator or Cupid, whether the governance be in realms celestial, courtly, or amatory. After bowing to his 'liege Seignour' in the second French dedication, Gower moves to the lover's self-rule, Cupid's jurisdiction, and homage to the beloved in a series of ballades, each spoken by a lover.<sup>84</sup>

The *Cinkante Balades*, like 'Rex Celi Deus' to which it is linked, are distinct for a near obsession with poetic genre. The overarching structure of the ballade, one of the *formes fixes*, calls attention to generic regularity, with expectations including a triadic rhyme scheme (often rhyme royal), a structure of three stanzas, a refrain, and in the late fourteenth century through the influence of Deschamps, an envoy.<sup>85</sup> These conventions were well-recognized but malleable, as demonstrated by Gower's employment of six different stanzaic patterns. While expectations may be to an extent 'fixes' for the ballade, artistry resides in rhetorical manipulation.<sup>86</sup>

81 CB, Latin verses, l. 2 and 9.

82 CB, Latin verses, l. 11.

83 CB, Dedication II, l. 21.

84 CB, Dedication II, l. 1; Van Dijk, *John Gower and the Limits of the Law*, pp. 68–69.

85 On Deschamps' popular use of the envoy in ballades, see James Laidlaw, 'L'innovation métrique chez Deschamps', in *Autour d'Eustache Deschamps: Actes du Colloque du Centre d'Études Médiévales de l'Université de Picardie — Jules Verne, Amiens, 5–8 Novembre 1998*, ed. by Danielle Buschinger (Amiens: Centre d'Études Médiévales, 1999), pp. 127–40. R. F. Yeager argues that Gower's use of an envoy in all but two of the *Cinkante Balades* suggests a late date for their composition, after 1385 when the influence of Deschamps would have been felt. See Yeager, 'John Gower's Audience', p. 82.

86 R. F. Yeager charts the different stanzaic and rhyme patterns for the *Cinkante Balades* in the Introduction to these poems in the section on 'Versification'. Besides the epistolary function of many ballades, perhaps Gower thought to entitle many of his 'lettre', because,

In addition to allowing various stanzaic structures, ballade forms easily branch out into the *Cinkante Balades*' subgenres: the 'balade escripte', complaint, supplication, 'dit', or 'chançon'.<sup>87</sup> Fastidiously discriminating the subgenre of many of the *Cinkante Balades* through announcements in the envoys,<sup>88</sup> Gower presents fourteen poems that he declares 'lettre' or, interchangeably, 'escrit' (I, II, III, IIIa, XV, XVIII, XX, XXII, XXVI, XXVII, XXXIII, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XLIII), a designation that is in itself exceptional, since other French balladeers wrote in different meters and genres when choosing to emphasize epistolary function.<sup>89</sup> In contrast, although songs are most common in French ballades, Gower surprises again by calling only one poem (XXXV) a 'chançon' and, in contrast to 'Rex Celi Deus', cleanly separating the genres of letter and song. Emphasizing epistolarity by a 14:1 ratio, Gower points once again to his interest in Ciceronian rhetorics, documentary styles, and literary missives.

To further complicate generic identification, Gower continually alters the letter form that he privileges by, for instance, delaying the salutation. In only one ballade (XXVI) does he adhere nearly perfectly to the Ciceronian dictaminal structure; otherwise, he adapts it to the economies of ballade stanzas and the opportunities to emphasize images and the emotional states of the lovers.<sup>90</sup> For Gower in both 'Rex Celi Deus' and the *Cinkante Balades*, epistolary form offers an almost endless field for poetic play. Gesturing toward those possibilities, the ballades engage in a metadiscourse in which the subgeneric identification of 'lettre' or 'chançon' becomes a topic of discussion in the stanzas, ruminating, as they sometimes do, on modes of composition and delivery. For example, the ballades labelled as letters emphasize the materiality of the poem (for instance its substitution for the narrator's heart), and the ballade labelled a song refers repeatedly

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as Ad Putter has pointed out, in the late fourteenth-century, French was still the language of epistles. See Ad Putter, 'The French of English Letters: Two Trilingual Verse Epistles in Context', in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England c. 1100–1500*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne with Carolyn Collette and others (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 402–05.

87 On the flexibility of the refrain, see Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, pp. 75–86; Jennifer Saltzstein, *The Refrain and the Rise of the Vernacular in Medieval French Music and Poetry* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013); and Yolanda Plumley, *The Art of Grafted Song: Citation and Allusion in the Age of Machaut* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For a theoretical reading of quotation and citation from troubadour poetry in European lyrics, see Sarah Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales: Troubadour Quotations and the Development of European Poetry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

88 Camargo, *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle*, p. 37.

89 Camargo, *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle*, p. 35. Although both Deschamps and Christine de Pizan sometimes used ballade form to compose letters, they preferred the octosyllabic couplets of the *saluts d'amour* when writing poems they declared to be verse epistles. See Camargo, *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle*, p. 36.

90 Camargo, *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle*, pp. 38–39.

to the narrator's singing. Gower highlights how different media and modes of address allow for various kinds of communication. Although both letters and songs assume oral delivery (since most medieval letters would have been read aloud in public by a messenger and songs would have been performed by a minstrel before a court), as Nicholson observes, 'the written letter, much more strongly than a song, emphasizes the unique dramatic moment of each poem: it creates the expectation of a response and thus an implicit dialogue.'<sup>91</sup> In contrast, the single 'chançon' and the few ballades that mention music underscore the corporeal but untouchable vocal performance to which no reply is expected. Even though all the ballades on the page are expected to reach their audiences through vocal delivery, Gower takes pains to create divisions between the oral and the written, the sung and the pronounced.<sup>92</sup> Ironically in the *Cinkante Balades*, the subcategory of 'lettre', a child of documentary culture intending to record, materialize, and ossify, appears to be just as ephemeral as the vocal performance until the lovers turn their attention to political or spiritual hierarchies beyond themselves. By continually marking the ballades' subgenres, Gower insists on the stability and familiarity of literary forms while simultaneously effecting key adaptations that foreground and sometimes question the viability of discursive categories.

Generic manipulations of epistolary rhetoric are evident from the first ballade. According to the rubrics in the Trentham Manuscript, the first five ballades in the series are spoken by those whose love is expected to come to fruition in marriage. In fact, the second ballade, which is declared a letter, contains language akin to a wedding vow: 'Le quel vous serve et long temps ad servi, / Tant com jeo vive et toutditz servira' (I serve you and have been at service so long / So long as I live I shall always serve you).<sup>93</sup> These first poems, then, contract pledges prior to vows that will be spoken in the undetermined future; they are documents promising the fulfilment of happiness. In contrast to these verse promissory notes, Gower reserves the more ephemeral song for the unhappy, unrequited crooner in *Balades XXXV*. The first five ballades underscore the betrothed's faithfulness in separation and the power of the love note to invoke the passion — and nearly the presence — of the authoring lover. *Balades I* even declares that the narrator gives himself to the lady 'through this letter'.<sup>94</sup> The value of these first poems, therefore, is in their materiality and potential as a gift that crosses the distance. Their epistolarity is announced in the

<sup>91</sup> Nicholson, 'Writing the *Cinkante Balades*', p. 317.

<sup>92</sup> Yeager, *Cinkante Balades*, X, n. 24: Yeager raises the possibility that in designating *Balades X* a 'balade escrit' Gower is distinguishing the written composition of the new ballade type from the sung versions of earlier ballades with musical accompaniment.

<sup>93</sup> CB II, ll. 11–12.

<sup>94</sup> CB I, l. 25.

envoys, though none of them observes dictaminal structure closely, and all delay the salutation to the lady. *Balades* II salutes the 'sweet lady' at the beginning of the second stanza; III and IIIa postpone the lover's greeting until the envoy.<sup>95</sup> As in 'Rex Celi Deus', the postponement of the salutation holds significance: when ballades I, II, III, and IIIa culminate in a salutation to the noble lady, the delayed greeting suggests a meeting after a long period apart. *Balades* V, the conclusion to this first group of poems, sets forth the joy of union with the beloved in heart and body that is to be realized — someday — on the wedding day. By disjoining letters from song, however, the formal verse of the ballades, structured somewhat like legalese, can suggest empty ritual. Though *Balades* I to V arrive at the very brink of fulfilment, the married bliss in which the lovers will serve each other 'sanz departir' (a phrase repeated fourteen times in *Balades* IIIb) is indefinitely postponed. The poems do not incorporate lyrics from the wedding mass and in this silence suggest the continued deferment of the desired consummation.<sup>96</sup> Unlike 'Rex Celi Deus', which infuses a hymn into a missive-like poem in order to invoke the coronation liturgy, the avoidance of references to music in the first five *Cinkante Balades* positions the affianced lovers perpetually outside the church doors and hints that the move toward secular society begun in Dedication I can lead to frustrations.

After the first set of poems spoken by affianced couples, most of the remaining ballades, as a gloss in the manuscript observes, are narrated by lovers in the grips of fortune: a benighted suitor whose verses dominate the cycle and whose relationship collapses under recriminations (VI–XL), the lady whom he desires (XLI–XLVIII and XLVI), and her eventual beloved (XLV and XLVII). These three reflect various positions on fortune's wheel.<sup>97</sup> At XLVIII a more philosophical narrator begins a

95 It is impossible to make certain assertions about *Balades* I because the first two stanzas are mostly illegible in the manuscript.

96 For sung responses surrounding the wedding mass in the Sarum ritual, see A. H. Pearson, *The Sarum Missal, in English*, <<https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=cYUBAAAAQAAJ&rdid=book-cYUBAAAAQAAJ&rdot=1>>, accessed 12 August 2021. According to the post-reformation missal, Psalm 127 was chanted as the bride and bridegroom entered the church; this may have been a tradition from medieval practice.

97 R. F. Yeager, *Cinkante Balades*, note at VI: 'Marginalia in F: *Les balades d'ici jesques au fin du livre sont universeles a tout le monde, selonc les propretés et les condicions des Amantz, qui sont diversement travaillent en la fortune d'amour*. ('The balades from here until the end of the book are universal, for everyone, according to the properties and conditions of Lovers who are diversely suffering the fortunes of Love.') Poems XLVII–LI, as Chapter Six will make clear, are spoken by a more philosophical narrator who seems to have learned hard lessons from the fortunes of love and as a result, turned toward the Virgin. While Peter Nicholson rightly emphasizes the experimentation with narrative voice that occurs over the cycle, I take the view that such experimentation does not necessarily mean a lack of narrative continuity in the CB. While Nicholson identifies blocks of poems that radiate similar poetic voices and themes, I argue that Gower uses the seasonal structuring of the cycle as way of building a

rational analysis of fortune's destructive control over secular courtship and makes a transition toward a religious definition of love, a celestial affection that resolves the tensions experienced by all the couples in the cycle.<sup>98</sup> This resolution is explored in Chapter Six. After epistolary ballades I–IIIa, articulating the promises of those about to be married, the missive-ballades in the rest of the cycle are exchanged by the three fictional lovers whose feelings swell and wane according to fortune's dictates and whose comfort resides in either a new partner or in the Virgin Mary. The first suitor expresses his devotion in ballades VI to XL, while the lady responds to him in XLI to XLIII. The closer that these two lovers come to crafting the perfect dictaminal ballade, the more they despair, and the letter without music becomes an empty vessel reflecting their failing courtship. As their liaison dies, the lady sends a missive to another who proves to be very much like Henry IV (XLIII), the voice of the new lover beckons in XLV, and the lady receives him as her own in XLVI. During the exchange of vows between the lady and this regal love (XLVI and XLVII), the dictaminal form disappears from the collection. Thus, in the *Cinkante Balades*, Gower deploys the letter only for incipient or unfulfilled relationships, whether those of affianced couples not having yet legalized their unions as in ballades I–IIIa or of a final set of lovers making their initial promises, or of those riding perpetually on fortune's wheel. The

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lovers' story that progresses through time. See Nicholson, 'Writing the *Cinquante Balades*', pp. 306–27.

<sup>98</sup> For one interpretation of the structure and narrative of CB, see R. F.

Yeager, Introduction, *Cinkante Balades* <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/yeager-gower-french-balades-cinkante-balades-introduction>> and 'John Gower's French', pp. 147–48. Since this second set of ballades reflects the fortunes of love, it is not necessary that they express a coherent narrative, as Peter Nicholson has argued. See Nicholson, 'Writing the *Cinkante Balades*', pp. 306–27. Yet, multiple references to the seasonal cycle, the presentation of a lover's drama that plays out over many months, and increasing difficulties in the lovers' relationship at the collection's midpoint suggest narrative uniformity and a general plot line. In fine dissertations, both Lynn Wells Hagman ('A Study of Gower's *Cinkante Balades*' [unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Detroit, 1968]) and Russell Ralph Cressman ('Gower's *Cinkante Balades* and French Court Lyrics' [unpublished doctoral thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1983]) chart a plot line for this ballade sequence.

Concerning the loose narrative of Gower's ballades, there is, however, disagreement over the poems toward the end of the cycle that are spoken by the lady, CB XLI–XLIII and XLVI. While in the Introduction to his edition, Macaulay explains that the lady rejects the narrator of the earlier poems in CB XLI–XLIII and then rejoices over a new lover in XLIII (pp. lxxvii, xxvii), other critics have argued that the lady's contradictory ballades reflect the variety of feeling that she experiences for the same lover, first spurning him for his treachery and then welcoming him again in *Balades* XLIII. For the latter view, see Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic*, p. 107 and Calin, 'John Gower's Continuity', pp. 380–85. For a nuanced reading of the CB spoken by a female narrator, see Holly Barbaccia, 'The Woman's Response in John Gower's *Cinkante Balades*' in *John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation and Tradition*, ed. by Elisabeth Dutton, with John Hines and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), pp. 230–38.

letter, usually intended to record and perpetuate tender feelings, inscribes sentiments that are almost always unrealized, inappropriate, or constantly shifting, and thus the content of the *Cinkante Balades*'s missives shakes free of the solidifying documentary form and passes into vocal performances that die away, not to be heard again.

The lovers of VI to XLVII are figures for those who must be brought into accord, both personally and diplomatically; they express disagreements that reflect both divergent perspectives on fidelity and on patriotic identification. With two noble men in amorous contest over the same lady, linguistic division between English and French surfaces when the lady rejects her first French-speaking suitor with an English 'nay'.<sup>99</sup> Vacillations between English and French reflect both the divisions and shared values among lovers on both sides of the Channel. While in the refrain to *Balades VII* the French-speaking lover 'desire[s] to be from [the lady's] country', in the end he cannot compete with the native rival who is similar to Henry IV as described in the multilingual dedications; royal, renowned, and like Henry 'an eagle', this kingly man is the English figure who can answer the lady's yearnings.<sup>100</sup> Although the English suitor, too, speaks French as a sign of courtly education and civility, the successful lover sends only two ballades: it seems from the exchanges between him and the lady that his strengths lie less in poetic expressions and more in honourable actions. Finally, the lady achieves political and celestial peace through appeals to a partner like Henry IV, who was compared to Christ in the Latin Dedication, and in the final ballade the reasonable narrator describes how her disappointed suitor (or any other lover) might find comfort in the Virgin Mother. As Sobecki notes, good governance around the time of Henry IV's coronation included effective diplomacy with France, and the *Cinkante Balades* reminded Henry of cultural practices shared with the French and aimed to dispose him toward peace.<sup>101</sup> In the *Cinkante Balades*' final verses, Gower declares Henry the only force who can resolve England's (the country's and the lovers') 'querele', and in the final ballade, he relies on the Virgin to provide enduring love forever.<sup>102</sup>

For the most part, in the second set of ballades, the various epistolary forms that Gower has constructed are heavily ironic, and direct address fails to connect one lover to the other. *Balades XV*, the first missive in this second set, turns the topos of the letter as a substitute for the heart

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99 CB XVII, l. 21. Jonathan Hsy suggests that the lady uses 'nay' as a particularly painful insult casting aspersions on the lover's Englishness and French language. See Hsy, *Trading Tongues*, pp. 112–13. As I argue here, it is also possible that the lady uses her native tongue to express her ultimate will and that with it, she attempts to drive a wedge between herself and her French-speaking suitor.

100 CB XLVI, l. 1.

101 Sobecki, 'Ecce patet tensus', pp. 946–49.

102 CB, Epilogue; CB LI.



into a lament for such materials that tie lovers together. In XV, the lover is as a hawk (significantly, not an eagle like Henry IV) tethered to his lady by unreturned passion, his cords binding him to an unnatural life in her cage. The epistolary form is as unnatural as the lover's situation: it entirely lacks a salutation and saves the exordium until the final stanza. With a beginning that abruptly introduces the suitor's imprisonment and a delay in capturing the lady's benevolence, the ballade foregrounds the suitor's own sorrow and suggests that achieving the lady's good will is a diminishing possibility. By the end of the poem the suitor does compare the lady to beauteous May — a strategy usually successful in garnering attention — but the compliment comes too late, after many piteous outpourings about the lady's 'constreinte', and leaves the impression that this lady is hardly the lover's merciful queen, but a woman of 'governance' arbitrary and cruel.<sup>103</sup> Again in XVIII, the second missive of this set, the lover compares himself to a sparrow-hawk that cries out loudly, though the lady is unmovable. The hopelessness of achieving her affection is indicated once again by a lack of salutation; in XVIII not only does he avoid saluting her, but he is unable to address her directly as 'lady' anywhere in the poem. She has become a third-person figure, remote and detached, someone about whom letters speak, not someone to whom they are addressed. Harder than a diamond that is impervious to the droplets of his tears, the lady in her harsh materiality overpowers the weak substance of his ballade.<sup>104</sup> By *Balades* XX, the lover sends a letter acknowledging his miserable state; the lady is as the goddess Fortuna overseeing the downfall of his chances, and the refrain laments, 'My dolour mounts, and my joy falls down.'<sup>105</sup> The suitor petitions the lady to release him from this implacable woe, but before offering reasons as to why she should do so. His arguments from classical authority that would typically occur in the *exordium* do not come until the final stanza; reference to the purposeful turn of Fortune's wheel for Agamemnon and Diomedes do not support his plea that the lady remove her restraining hand and allow his fortune to change. As the final stanza explains, Agamemnon became emperor because Palamedes suffered; Diomedes enjoyed Cressida because Troilus was betrayed. These

<sup>103</sup> CB XV, l. 9.

<sup>104</sup> Claiming that the lady is harder than a diamond, in ballade XVIII Gower cites Guillaume Machaut's virelai 'Plus dure qu'un dyamant'. Thanks to Linda Marie Zaerr for providing this reference.

<sup>105</sup> CB XX, ll. 8, 16, 24, and 28: *Ma dolour monte et ma joie descresce*. On the commonplace nature and reiterative use of such lines — and the sophistication latent in them through intertextuality, see Ardis Butterfield, 'The Art of Repetition: Machaut's Ballade 33, "Nes qu'on porroit"', *Early Music*, 31.3 (August 2003), 346–60. Butterfield lectured on Gower's complex use of nearly cliché passages in her keynote address to The Third International Congress of the John Gower Society, University Rochester, 30 June–3 July, 2014, 'Gower, In Other Words.'

classical 'proofs' may show that Fortune's wheel turns, but they point to the fact that another will receive his lady once it does.

Here, at the halfway point of the ballade collection, the one letter in perfect dictaminal form (XXVI) inaugurates the lover's final descent into rejection and the opportunity by XLIII for the lady to take a new lover. *Balades* XXVI is the only poem in Gower's sequence to replicate the Ciceronian structure for a letter employed in 'Rex Celi Deus'. It begins with a proper greeting: 'Salutations, honour and reverence / From one lover, subject to his regent / To you, lady, and to your excellence / I send, if you please, with humble intent'.<sup>106</sup> In a break with his usual practice, Gower does not postpone the salutation until the end of the poem; the narrator instead addresses the lady immediately and clarifies his 'soubgit' position toward her.<sup>107</sup> After the salutation, the *exordium* commences, as the narrator seeks the lady's approval and promises to give her pleasure by writing.<sup>108</sup> The *exordium* contains the first use of the ballade's refrain, which is also aimed at 'capturing benevolence': 'A heart should suffice, without another gift'.<sup>109</sup> Since the poem is a surrogate for the narrator's heart, this *exordium* encourages her to accept his ballade and his affections, offered with such simplicity. From here, the *narratio* begins as it conveys the lover's intention to give the lady all he has because of his joy in her honour and beauty. Although the heart should be present enough, the narrator explains, a man who offers his love means to give all.<sup>110</sup> With the lover's generous spirit apparent, the petition, through another use of the refrain, entreats the lady to welcome his pure and boundless love.<sup>111</sup> However, though the *exordium* includes the proverbial refrain establishing the value of this missive's gift of the heart and though the *narratio* lays out the self-sacrificing devotion offered to such an admirable lady, the envoy hints that rather than be pleased with her lover's humility, the lady is likely to reject the poem: the lover worries that 'Danger this gift may despire'.<sup>112</sup> Ironically, the dictaminal structure and the potential to substitute for the lover in XXVI fail in their form and function because the lady rebuffs letter, heart, and man.

After *Balades* XXVI demonstrates the failure of the Ciceronian epistle, letters included later in the sequence imply that no tweaking of dictaminal

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106 CB XXVI, ll. 1–4: *Salutz honour et toute reverence, / Com cil d'amour q'est tout vostre soubgit, / Ma dame, a vous et a vostre excellence / Envoie, sil vous plect, d'umble esprit [...]*. Camargo has outlined the dictaminal structure of this ballade, though his divisions are slightly different than mine. See Camargo, "Middle English Verse," p. 39.

107 CB XXVI, l. 2.

108 CB XXVI, l. 4.

109 CB XXVI, l. 8: *Sanz autre doun le coer doit bien suffire*.

110 CB XXVI, ll. 9–20.

111 CB XXVI, ll. 21–24.

112 CB XXVI, l. 26: *Ne sai si vo danger le voet despire*.

form will be persuasive with the lady. XXVII moves the petition up to the first stanza as it begs the lady for her ‘medicine’, but the narrator ends the poem in a state of consternation, acknowledging that he prefers illness to health in her absence.<sup>113</sup> XXXVIII jettisons the petition entirely in favour of listing the lady’s virtues, including a lovely appearance and good manners. Nevertheless, though the lady’s blessedness implies her generosity, and though the poem reconstructs a chain of liberality — God granting so much beauty to Nature, who then endows the lady with all graces — the lady is asked for and offers nothing. In fact, in the opening line of XXXVIII, she is a magnet attracting and receiving all. The narrator may take joy in yielding to her, but by withholding the petition, he also acknowledges that the ballade is not designed to have any effect. Seeming to correct the lack of a direct request in XXXVIII, the next ballade begins by outlining the narrator’s desires for the lady’s Marian qualities — ‘bounté’, ‘bealté’, and ‘grace’ — but his introductory appeals combining the salutation and petition fail to achieve the goal spelled out in the refrain: the aim of spending his life with her.<sup>114</sup> This poem, XXXIX, is in fact the last letter before the love affair’s final collapse and the lady’s missive to her new lover in XLIII.

While, on the one hand, the lady’s missive to a new lover signals the demise of her affair with the first suitor, on the other hand, it offers a rare and binding pledge of faith in epistolary form such as has not been seen since the first ballades between affianced lovers. The lady’s missive, surfacing as it does at this critical juncture in the *Cinkante Balades*, demonstrates once again Gower’s investment in fashioning passionate women’s voices from epistolary traditions, an investment that we traced in the previous chapter’s analysis of Canace’s letter to Machaire in the *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>115</sup> Abandoning all restraint in her sense of relief at having discovered a worthy beau, the lady, in her strong expression of desire, recalls Canace’s fierce love. ‘Even if I were the empress of Rome’, the lady asserts, ‘Your amity I could not refuse.’<sup>116</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, Canace’s epistolary voice in Book 3 of the *Confessio Amantis* surfaces strongly despite attempts by her father Aeolus and moralizing glosses of the text to repress her taboo desire. Similarly, the lady in XLIII expresses her ‘joie’, even though the disappointments served up by her previous suitor and the rules of modesty might discourage it.<sup>117</sup> In the *Cinkante Balades*, the lady’s missive to her new partner approximates dictaminal structure very closely, even if it does

<sup>113</sup> CB XXVII, l. 4.

<sup>114</sup> CB XXXIX, ll. 3, 4, and 5.

<sup>115</sup> William Calin associates the emergence of the lady’s voice in the *Cinkante Balades* with the literary example of Christine de Pizan. See Calin, ‘John Gower’s Continuity’, p. 96.

<sup>116</sup> CB XLIII, ll. 5–6: *Si jeo de Rome fuisse l’emperesse, / Vostre ameisté refuserai jeo mie [...]*.

<sup>117</sup> CB XLIII, l. 10.

not conform as perfectly as her former lover's effort in XXVI. Putting a documentary pledge in the power of a woman, the ballade cycle has finally arrived at a missive whose recognizable form contains the desired fidelity. Her expert 'lettre' is inspired by her new lover's excellence. The lady opens with a promising salutation to one who is '[v]ailant, courtois, gentil et renomée', secures his good will by designating him an 'amie', and narrates the progress of his 'fame', both in the field and in her heart.<sup>118</sup> She can assume that his recent vow of 'corps et coer' will stand because of the integrity of this beau, whom she names the eagle in her next ballade.<sup>119</sup> He has the power to 'comfort the heart' and heal 'all maladies', his curative touch recalling the introductory verses to the *Cinkante Balades* in which Henry IV is called upon to bind the wounds of all England.<sup>120</sup> Together, they close many lesions in the epistolary form, her feelings arriving intact and his supporting them with a respectful reading.

The lady, well-matched with her Henrician partner, exits the ballade cycle. Love and accord between them is established not so much by the documentary epistle's record of promising love, but by the great character of a kingly figure who can bring the quarrels of both courtiers and country to an end and by the lady's perceptive recognition of and affection for it. Through his beneficence, the lady's struggles cease, and she anticipates a life of joy in his companionship. The first suitor, however, must find peace, so we return to him and his emotional journey toward the Virgin Mary, a spiritual destination described by the *Cinkante Balades'* final narrator in a poem to be discussed in the next chapter. One pivotal point for the first suitor, as we have seen, is ballade XXVI, the perfect but despairing exemplar of dictaminal structure in which he accepts Danger's presence; another is ballade XXXV, the only lyrics sung by the first suitor, in which he abandons all hope of a future with the beloved. Through the first suitor's ballades, Gower responds to and manipulates literary expectations about not only epistolary form, but also musical poetry.

We have seen that in the first suitor's epistles to the lady Gower experiments with dictaminal form where it would not be expected and then diverges from the usual Ciceronian structure. Unlike the merging of an epistle with a hymn in 'Rex Celi Deus', Gower has kept song out of the ballade-missives, no matter what epistolary form they take, and music in the background of most of the *Cinkante Balades*. While all the ballades adapt musical rhythm through regular meter and while some cite refrains previously set to music, there is only one *chançon*, sung by the first suitor, and other signs of internal melody typical of ballades are erased. The standard narrative figure of the balladeer singing to his beloved is present

<sup>118</sup> CB XLIII, ll. 1, 7, and 8.

<sup>119</sup> CB XLIII, l. 3. CB XLVI, l. 1.

<sup>120</sup> CB XLIII, ll. 11 and 13: *conforté le coer; des toutz mals guarie*.

in only the single *chançon*, no avian chorus bursts forth when birds are gathered in the spring, hardly a reference to harmonious sound crosses the ballades, and no musical notation or glosses connecting the lyrics to melody exist anywhere in the Trentham Manuscript. Along with epistolary innovations, the minimization of music in ballades, a genre known for tunefulness, shows an originality and purpose that Gower manifests in the poems of the first suitor. In the one *chançon* that the first suitor does sing (XXXV), his melodious recital signals his isolated woe, a performance in stark contrast to the hymn-singing in 'Rex Celi Deus', where church music brings the entire universe into accord. Through the *chançon* of the first suitor, who loses the contest with a Henrician lover for the lady's affections, Gower highlights the painful seclusion of those who represent causes inimical to Henry IV, whether these struggles be international or internal, political or personal. The first suitor who writes so many French documents will have been bested by the Henrician beau by *Balade XLIII*, while the first suitor's lonely song fades away.

To understand the *Cinkante Balades'* treatment of music and Gower's experimentations involving the first suitor's song, we must investigate established connections between ballades and music, particularly the melodies associated with ballade refrains. Traditional literary history has it that ballades derived in French tradition from lyrics for song and dance, though Jennifer Saltzstein has emphasized the clerical and intellectual uses of musical refrains deployed in ballades.<sup>121</sup> From the thirteenth-century *chansonnières*, collections including a variety of types such as *troubadour cansos*, dance songs, and *pastourelles*, arose the fourteenth-century collections of *formes fixes* by single authors.<sup>122</sup> Whether ballades actually derive from folk music genres or branch out from studious practices interpolating lyric refrains and proverbs in allusive verse — a process that Yolanda Plumley calls 'grafting' — the genre spotlights refrains associated with various kinds of song.<sup>123</sup> Plumley observes that in refrains 'older songs could continue to have currency for years after their composition',<sup>124</sup> and

121 Saltzstein, *The Refrain*, pp. 35–79.

122 Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, pp. 25–29.

123 Plumley, *The Art of Grafted Song*. In her analysis Plumley distinguishes between 'refrains' with a lower case 'r' and 'Refrain forms' (upper case), the former referring to the sort of repeated, interchangeable tag line that I am discussing here and the latter to 'short song forms characterized by a repeated Refrain section'. See 'A Note on Terminology', p. xxi. Throughout her book, Plumley emphasizes the competitiveness inherent in revising and reusing refrains already composed for traditional songs or puy-like events, and she finds that the practice of citing familiar tags intensified into the late Middle Ages, rather than passed out of fashion with the advance of polyphonic music.

124 Plumley, *The Art of Grafted Song*. On the relationship between song and poetry, see also Marisa Galvez, *Songbook: How Lyrics Became Poetry in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2013).

even when refrains are newly invented for the purpose of a particular poem, they are crafted, as Paul Zumthor notes, in imitation of popular tunes.<sup>125</sup> In this way, ballade lyrics often invoked familiar music that would have surrounded medieval people as they participated in festivals or heard minstrel performances. Medieval French ballade refrains, like ‘refrains’ in affect theory today, would have constituted a well-recognized ‘scoring of the world’s repetitions’, a reverberation of customary beliefs, practices, ideas, emotions, and airs, that were shared by French-speaking people of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>126</sup> For Gower, the refrain was one more instrument in a rhetoric of repetition, a French popular culture counterpart to his ubiquitous reiterations of Ovidian lines, themselves deeply embedded and recontextualized throughout literary history.

In the history of the traditionally tuneful ballade cum refrain, the transitional figures are Guillaume Machaut, whose ‘most important role lies in his technical mastery of poetry and music together’, and Eustache Deschamps, who focused entirely on verbal mastery.<sup>127</sup> Analysing the influence of Machaut, Butterfield stresses the interdependence of poetry and music and the ways in which both changed during these centuries in which they were composed by writing.<sup>128</sup> In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, for instance, lyrics prized enough to be written often reflect courtly rather than popular tastes and began to be paired with polyphonies in advancing practices of musical notation.<sup>129</sup> After Machaut’s death, Deschamps, not himself a composer, popularized a new ballade form including an envoy, but excluding an interlinked melody. Asserting that the ‘natural’ music of the words is superior to ‘artificial’ compositions for the voice and instruments, Deschamps emphasized verbal beat over musical rhythm and the melodious speaking voice over a melody.<sup>130</sup> Perhaps taking Deschamps’s lead against the fuller tide of harmonious ballade traditions, Gower also reacts against Machaut by largely divorcing the *Cinkante Balades* from vocal and instrumental music. Indeed, he goes even farther than Deschamps in presenting narrators who are composers of documents rather than singers of songs. As we have seen, the first suitor,

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125 Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. by Philip Bennett. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 196.

126 Kathleen Steward, ‘Afterword: Working Refrains’, in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 339.

127 Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, p. 218. See also Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

128 Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, p. 219.

129 Lawrence M. Eap, ‘Lyrics for Reading and Lyrics for Singing in Late Medieval France: The Development of the Dance Lyric from Adam de la Halle to Guillaume de Machaut’, in *The Union of Words and Music*, ed. by Rebecca Baltzer and others (Austin: University of Texas, 1991), pp. 101–31.

130 Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, pp. 75–86.

whose pains are not resolved along with the lady's, is one of those textual *personae* until he bursts forth in one sorrowful *chançon*.

Gower's reaction against Machaut's music did not preclude citing refrains by the famous French composer and others. Noting *Balade XXV*'s adaptation of the refrain 'Qui bien aime a tard oblié' (He who loves well forgets late), Butterfield situates Gower among other French poets of his time who hark back to and redeploy tag lines from thirteenth-century song collections.<sup>131</sup> According to Yeager, 'Qui bien aime a tard oblié' is a proverbial refrain deployed by Machaut and others, even appearing in the margins of manuscripts containing Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*.<sup>132</sup> It was meant to be sung to the popular tune 'Now welcome, somer, with thy sunne softe'<sup>133</sup>; however, Gower's ballade is harsh and cacophonous, expressing a whirlwind of emotions and even calling down curses against love's slanderers. Planting the lover's refrain 'Qui bien aime a tard oblié' in a discordant ballade that offers 'fals jangle' instead of tender harmony, Gower seems to be experimenting with Deschamps's theory of natural music, of language sound and rhythm replacing or even counteracting soft instrumental or vocal airs.<sup>134</sup> In the *Cinkante Balades* refrains taken from other poems and their differing discursive contexts are put to the service of heartbreak in the first suitor's verses, radically altering the meaning of other balladeers and calling into question the first suitor's suitability for amorous commitments. Gower plunges well-recognized refrains, with their variegated history, through the first suitor's ballades in order to create waves of language that are 'capable of overthrowing' the first suitor's discourses.<sup>135</sup> Félix Guattari's theory of 'complex refrains' that present a 'polyphony' of points of view can be compared to Gower's lyrical refrains in the *Cinkante Balades*, repetitive language composed long ago by others that, juxtaposed with his own reiterative verse, reveals a multiplicity of perspectives.<sup>136</sup> Although the first suitor narrates a majority of the *Cinkante Balades*, the multiplicity of perspectives bursting from the refrains prohibits both lady and reader from completely identifying with this fictional balladeer. Perhaps a character who deploys 'Qui bien aime a tard oblié' in revenge against slanderers rather than in compliments to his

131 Ardis Butterfield, 'French Culture and the Ricardian Court' in *Essays on Ricardian Literature in Honour of J. A. Burrow*, ed. by Alastair Minnis, Charlotte C. Morse, and Thorlac Turville-Petre (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 101–03.

132 Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic*, p. 67. See also E. Koepfel, 'Gower's Französische Balladen und Chaucer', *Englische Studien*, 20 (1895), 155.

133 Laurence Earp, *Guillaume de Machaut: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland, 1995), p. 366.

134 CB XXV, l. 3.

135 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Sydney: Power, 1995), p. 19.

136 Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, p. 15.

beloved requires an ethical and moral transformation before he deserves someone as fine as the lady. Certainly, his shortcomings, revealed through perverse and unmusical adaptations of refrains, cast additional lustre upon the Henrician lover and cause the reader some relief when the first suitor is encouraged to turn to the Virgin Mary for spiritual improvement in the last ballade.

As Butterfield has demonstrated, many refrains were set to multiple tunes between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries — and some occur without musical notation at all.<sup>137</sup> This context for the reception of French refrains allowed Gower broad licence in using them, even opening the ironic possibility of citing them in order to curtail song. Gower largely separates the vocal music of the refrains from the refrain lyrics, just as he splits up fractious lovers in an overarching attempt to focus on ‘good love’.<sup>138</sup> In the *Cinkante Balades*, he short-changes the ability of refrains to invoke music by banishing the figure of the singing balladeer in all of the poems but one or by locating the refrain in a poem that emphasizes silence or discordant sound. In this way, the first suitor sometimes speaks words that suggest communal singing, but as the foil to Henry IV, he might not join the community. The first suitor has not learned a key lesson advanced in affect theory and expressed here by Kathleen Steward that ‘[t]he body has to learn to play itself like a musical instrument in this world’s compositions’.<sup>139</sup> In the Trentham Manuscript, Henry IV is the chief figure in God’s composition of the English world, and unless directed by Henry or a higher moral force, the first suitor will find only a life and poetry of discord.

As the first suitor’s unhappiness with the love affair increases, a song begins to build in his heart. Before this moment, except for the use of refrains, the *Cinkante Balades* have made only two references to singing. First, in *Balades XII* on the lady’s disdain and the power of Danger to turn

137 Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, pp. 75–86.

138 In ‘John Gower’s Audience’, pp. 82–86, Yeager stresses Gower’s debt to Deschamps. In an earlier essay, he argues that Gower appropriates French practices and quotes from Deschamps, Machaut, Granson, and Froissart in order ‘to turn the strength of a tradition against itself by exposing what Gower believed to be its essential immorality, and to reclaim it for legitimate lovers everywhere’. See Yeager, ‘John Gower’s French’, p. 147. Although Gower writes ballades for lovers who will marry and ends the sequence with a ballade to the Virgin, I do not agree that in emphasizing reasonable love, he is necessarily rejecting French models. More to the point, Ardis Butterfield argues that Gower participates in current trends in Francophone regions to adapt traditional models of love song and poetry. See Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language & Nation in the Hundred Years’ War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 247. On the issue of good love, or honest love, see J. A. W. Bennett, ‘Gower’s “Honest Love”’, in *Patterns of Love and Courtesy: Essays in Memory of C. S. Lewis*, ed. by John Lawlor (London: Edward Arnold, 1966), pp. 108–20.

139 Kathleen Steward, ‘Afterword: Worlding Refrains’, in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 341.



her eyes away, the narrator equates singing with crying: it does not matter which he expresses, he claims, because the lady will not notice.<sup>140</sup> Second, *Balades XXXII* declares that misfortune in love destroys the ability to sing; while others carol and play in the springtime court, the rebuffed lover is hushed by a wintry cloud. Since his lady abandoned him in the winter, the narrator wishes for nature to project his dejection always, to blow in the cold, biting air and forbid the return of spring song.

However, spring does return, and the consummate springtime poems are the first suitor's Valentine's Day ballades (XXXIII and XXXV). Gower, with Chaucer and Granson, was among the first to compose poems for this lovers' feast.<sup>141</sup> The *Cinkante Balades* contains two such poems recalling Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* in which Nature convenes a host of birds on Valentine's Day so that each might find her mate. Gower's valentines, like the *Parliament of Fowls*, compare lovers to avian creatures: in XXXIII, the first suitor imagines St Valentine's parliament, calls his beloved a 'beautiful bird', and hopes that their elopement might be like that of Ceix and Alceone, a flight of two feathered lovers; in XXXV he continues to set the scene in the parliament of birds, likens his beloved to a phoenix, and laments his status as an interloper among birds which Nature has already paired. As Michael J. Warren points out, 'Lévi-Strauss's familiar remarks on the parallels between birds' and humans' interactions and communications would not have appeared strange to medieval thinkers'.<sup>142</sup> Although medieval music and grammar masters made distinctions between the *vox articulata* of humans and the *vox confusa* of other species, the various songs of birds could be phonetically transcribed and rendered meaningful in contexts suggestive of human society, especially in mating practices similar to human courtship.<sup>143</sup> Gower's *Cinkante Balades XXXIII* and XXXV, as well as Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*, employ an avian motif to highlight

<sup>140</sup> CB, XII, l. 23.

<sup>141</sup> See H. A. Kelly's conclusions on the connections between these authors and St Valentine's Day and on the impossibility of determining who wrote the first St Valentine's Day verses. Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Chaucer and the Cult of Saint Valentine* (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

<sup>142</sup> Michael J. Warren, "Kek kek": Translating Birds in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 38 (2016), 109. For the comparison between humans and birds in terms of their social and communicative behaviour, see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 204. Susan Crane's Biennial Chaucer Lecture discusses interspecies relations and in particular Chaucer's depiction of the bond between Canacee and the formel in *The Squire's Tale*. See Susan Crane, 'For the Birds', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 29 (2007), 23–41. Among medieval writers who compare the voices of birds and humans, see Albertus Magnus, *On Animals: A Medieval Summa Zoologica*, trans. by K. F. Kitchell and I. M. Resnick, 2 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1999), 1, pp. 480–81.

<sup>143</sup> For the distinction between the *vox articulata* and the *vox confusa*, see Probus, *Grammatici Latini*, ed. by Heinrich Keil, 7 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1857–80), 4, p. 47. For an analysis of this distinction, see Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later*

textuality and orality, categories that do not perfectly correlate with *articulata* and *confusa*, but gesture in a similar direction. In the valentines of both poets, the formal writing that indicates crystallized expression gives way to ungoverned sound. The *Parliament of Fowls* begins in Ciceronian reading and ends in avian chatter, while Gower's valentine verses begin with a formal epistolary structure (XXXVIII) and end with a song of uncertain tune (XXXV). The letter solidifies into a document the lover's daydream that he and his beloved could be transformed into free flying birds, just like Ceix and Alceone, but the song lands our feathered fantasizer back in court, where even transformative wings could not help him gain his lady's chamber.<sup>144</sup>

Considering the subject matter of the first valentine, *Balade XXXVIII*, and the host of birds populating it, the presentation of a letter rather than of birdsong is surprising. Gower demonstrates his capacity in the *Visio Anglie* for amplifying on various avian sounds: the cuckoo's repetitions and the lark's trills.<sup>145</sup> There, he lays out a gorgeous springtime setting that, though full of ominous clues, contrasts sharply with the horrors of the 1381 Uprising. In *Cinkante Balades XXXVIII*, however, there is no joyous chirping or clucking to usher in the spring, but instead St Valentine's pronouncements in the winged court and Nature's sensible dictate that partners should be of the same degree. These are legal matters suitable for description in the dictaminal form of ballade XXXVIII. As the letter reflects human bureaucracy, it deemphasizes the natural world represented by the birds, a world with which the first suitor must conform to fulfil his desires. Sadly, ballade XXXVIII implies a taunting, textual division between the human suitor and feathered lovers. The presence of birds and the unfulfilled expectation of their variegated songs highlights, in Elizabeth Eva Leach's analysis, connections and divisions between the music and language of human culture and vociferous animal nature.<sup>146</sup> In an epistle laying out the rules for mating, the first suitor's whimsy concerning an imagined avian metamorphosis for him and his beloved struggles to break out of the documentary style, and at the height of this daydream the reader might expect to hear a chorus of supportive birdsong. Yet, the Ovidian fancy in which he compares himself and the lady to Ceix and Alceone is a natural extension of a refrain that suggests legal compulsion and

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*Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 40 and Sarah Kay, 'The Soundscape of Troubadour Lyric, or, How Human is Song?' *Speculum*, 91.4 (October 2016), 1002–15.

<sup>144</sup> Michael J. Warren comments on Ceix and Alceone's avian transformation in the CA.

See Michael J. Warren, *Birds in Medieval Poetry: Metaphors, Realities, and Transformations* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2018), pp. 189–92.

<sup>145</sup> VA, ll. 91–106.

<sup>146</sup> Leach, *Sung Birds*. For an analysis of human and animal song in medieval lyric and what such singing implies for medieval categories of 'human' and 'non-human', see Kay, 'The Soundscape of Troubadour Lyric', pp. 1002–15.

belongs in dictaminal form: 'Where the heart is, the body must comply'.<sup>147</sup> The first suitor has mythologized rather than joined the flock at large on Valentine's Day. The lover sends this 'escript' to his 'beautiful bird' and in so doing emphasizes delivery by a messenger of this ballade-missive and presents it as a tangible, though unmusical, gift.<sup>148</sup> Because it documents an unlikelihood, it represents one more example in the *Cinkante Balades* of an empty epistolary form binding no one.

That the same suitor will next offer the lady a song speaks to the flexibility of the modes of ballade delivery and of the messengers — heralds or minstrels — who would have been relied on to transport and present such poems. According to Andrew Taylor, there was a 'close connection between minstrels and heralds [...] [whose] duties overlapped', so messenger and singer might be one and the same, especially since the tunes for delivering a song were often quite basic and chant-like.<sup>149</sup> Concluding that a 'modest melodic form such as that employed in a simple psalm-tone setting [...] is the probable basic mode of performance for a herald, in which the melodic content is more or less subservient to that of the text', Timothy McGee describes a situation in which a herald might pronounce an epistolary valentine and then sing another in plainchant.<sup>150</sup> In the fiction of the *Cinkante Balades*, not only the herald implied by the requirement of delivering a ballade-missive, but also the first suitor seems to be adept at both clerical and musical discourses. Outside of the fiction, Gower, preparing the *Cinkante Balades* in the Trentham Manuscript for Henry IV, presents himself as similarly skilful. It is only in the second Valentine poem, however, that Gower proves an ability in the sung ballade through the first suitor — or sets up the herald or minstrel to sing for him. *Balade XXXV* is a burst of song at the height of the first suitor's despair. Although XXXV does not come with musical notation in the Trentham Manuscript and although Gower was not a composer, for a sung performance he might have been relying on the simple tunes that McGee cites — a practice that would conform to his preference for a plain style and his deployment of plainchant in 'Rex Celi Deus'. Alternatively, Gower might have been assuming that ballade XXXV would be sung to one of the *contrafacta*, popular melodies that were adapted to various lyrics. While famous composers such as Machaut often created their own music, many *gestours* sang fashionable or occasional verse to easily recognized tunes;

<sup>147</sup> CB XXXIII, ll. 8, 16, 24, and 28: *U li coers est, le corps falt obeir*.

<sup>148</sup> CB XXXIII, l. 27.

<sup>149</sup> Andrew Taylor, 'Songs of Praise and Blame and the Repertoire of the Gestour', in *The Entertainer in Medieval and Traditional Culture: A Symposium*, ed. by Thomas Pettit (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 1997), p. 53.

<sup>150</sup> Timothy McGee, *The Ceremonial Musicians of Late Medieval Florence* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), p. 79.

sometimes the melody was so elementary as to be the same from line to line.<sup>151</sup> Whatever tune is assumed for *chançoun* XXXV, it expresses, as can be seen in my translation in the appendix to this chapter, the sadness of unrequited passion: love, like the vocal performance, vanishes into the air.

*Balades* XXXV, like XXXIII, opens on the vision of St Valentine and the convocation of birds that are strangely quiet. This avian hush ominously reminds the audience of *Balades* XII, in which the lady is compared to a plover that silently averts her eyes from a man near death.<sup>152</sup> In XXXV, the lady refuses to join the first suitor in becoming as Ceix and Alceone; instead she transmogrifies on her own and becomes the phoenix. Seeking solitude and presumably quiet, the lady now 'rises in solo flight / Throughout the region of Araby.'<sup>153</sup> In this transmigration, even before she has formally rejected the first suitor, she takes wing far away, where the narrator cannot follow her as he dreams of doing in XXXIII. Supremely alone, she 'cannot have great joy', according to the refrain invented by Gower, and her retreat imposes isolation and despair also upon the lover. In an inversion of expectations, the narrator sings of his outcast state, though the lady-bird in her foreign domain and St Valentine in his avian court maintain a decorous silence. Ready as the lover claims to be to imitate all fowls in the 'honest' selection of a life partner, he agonizes over his inexplicable difference from them and his lady's refusal to engage, underscoring that difference.<sup>154</sup> The first lover alone fails to experience an avian metamorphosis, while the 'Eagle' and his phoenix-lady eventually soar above their pain with a new identity and a new love. As Michael J. Warren perceives, Gower often emphasizes the positive outcomes when humans metamorphose into birds; despite religious distrust of bodily transformations that would reverse human dominion over beasts, Gower demonstrates in narratives patterned on Ovid that the self-concept achieved when becoming avian can lead to superior rational, social, and spiritual behaviour. Having been diverted from love's path and denied the bird's flight, the first lover is an outlier in St Valentine's society of others who are well-governed and well-matched. His outburst both begins and ends his musical career; it completes his amorous quest in the secular world, as well. We shall see in the next chapter that he will be encouraged to find true love with the Virgin Mary in the spiritual realm.

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<sup>151</sup> Taylor, 'Songs of Praise', p. 55. A late thirteenth-century treatise on music explains that when presenting the 'gestes' of kings, the 'cantus gestualis' (song of the deeds) should be sung by using the same melody for each verse. See Johannes de Grocheio, *Ars musica*, ed. and trans. by Constant Mews and others (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011), 9.3.

<sup>152</sup> CB, XII, ll. 1–4.

<sup>153</sup> CB, XXXV, ll. 9–11: *En Arabie celle regioun, / Ensi ma dame en droit de son amour / Souleine maint [...]*.

<sup>154</sup> CB, ll. 5 and 15–18.

In the meantime, in *Balades* XXXVI, the blackbird and parrot, seeming to jest at the first suitor's sorrowful performance, lift their throats in melodious pleasure unusual to the feathered figures in the *Cinkante Balades*. In XXXVI the pleasurable May-time birdsong accentuates the first suitor's lack of success and is thus a mockery rather than the agent of political and cosmic harmony. From the second valentine ballade onward complete despair wafts in with song, and by XL the first suitor is accusing the lady of breaking promises, and he is threatening to sing a 'chançoun verrai' (true song) once he separates from her.<sup>155</sup> Like him, the lady will also offer to sing out of grief before she meets her new beloved: in XLIII she forcefully launches the first suitor's previous exemplars of classical lovers against him as she accuses him of being a Jason, Hercules or Theseus, for whose deceptions she should raise a sorrowful chant.<sup>156</sup> The lady, however, never sings this pitiful song of victimization, and as we have watched the wheel of fortune turn, we have seen her joy and solace in a new lover who appears to be very like the new English king, the recipient of the *Cinkante Balades* as a coronation gift. The single *chançoun* and the few references to music in the ballade cycle have not contributed to this new harmony, but instead have underscored treachery, isolation, and contempt, the sorts of loneliness and betrayal that the reader is happy to see go their way on fortune's wheel.

The first suitor and the lady separate, and the divisions between the ballade subgenres of 'letter' and 'chançoun' indicate the unsuitability of the pair. Letters, whose form is designed to facilitate an intimate connection between a separated writer and addressee, serve mainly to span the distance between them, and songs, which might be performed at weddings or court celebrations, signal the seclusion of each lover. Whereas the collusion between epistolarity and music in 'Rex Celi Deus' establishes a bonding English rhetoric, the discrete deployment of various subgenres in the *Cinkante Balades* separate those who are inappropriately joined until they learn to pursue more worthy passions, such as dedication to the new English king or to the Virgin Mary. In *Balades* XLVII the lady's new partner swears fidelity in language suitable to Henry, the new bridegroom for both this lady and the entire kingdom. The Henrician beau promises to learn the history of his love, to suffer the good with the bad, and to serve and cherish the place where his heart dwells.<sup>157</sup> On the other hand, the first suitor must regain his reason and retrace, in the words of the conclusion's philosophical narrator, the way to an honourable 'rewardise'.<sup>158</sup> Now that

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<sup>155</sup> CB XL, l. 22.

<sup>156</sup> On the lady's use of the language and exemplars of the lover, see Barbaccia, 'The Woman's Response', pp. 234–36.

<sup>157</sup> CB XLVII, ll. 15–20.

<sup>158</sup> CB XL, l. 19.

the missives document neither the marriage of the betrothed lovers in *Balades* I–V nor the consummation for those wracked on fortune’s wheel, and now that references to music inspire neither joy nor unity, the lovers’ passions dissipate and give way to values that support English society. The three final secular ballades, spoken by the philosophical lover who is more like Gower *in propria persona*, emphasize that fortune ravages all in love (XLVIII), that marriage is the best institution for good love (XLIX), and that love improves all people who exercise reason (XLIX). The final ballade (LI) is addressed to potential admirers of the Virgin, who stands as a source of moral improvement and inspires the narrator to pray for King Henry, any English lover’s new joy. When the philosophical suitor gives his body and soul to the Virgin in the final ballade, he eschews the use of both the musical refrain and dictaminal structures for verses of wholehearted Marian praise, lifting him above grudging lovers and rendering him a devotee who earns ‘ciel en heritance’.<sup>159</sup>

## Conclusion

The Trentham Manuscript, most likely a working copy of a more elaborate codex presented to Henry IV around the time of his coronation, suggests Gower’s many literary experiments in code switching and generic play. This chapter has focused on ways that two works in Trentham, ‘Rex Celi Deus’ and the *Cinkante Balades*, offer rhetorical manipulations of letters and song. ‘Rex Celi Deus’, a Latin epistolary poem, alludes to the well-known vespers hymn ‘Celi Deus Sanctissime’ in order to re-enact the coronation liturgy, and various of the *Cinkante Balades* explode traditional expectations concerning missives and music in order to undermine unreasonable passions and eventually direct the reader to good love. Such differing approaches to letters and songs in these texts arrive at a similar end, the adulation of Henry IV as love’s divine ambassador, and they do so by tapping into some of Gower’s most favoured rhetorical methods: the use of epistolary arrangements to project alternative voices and the *repetitio* of familiar texts and phrases to bond with an audience and bridge past with present.

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<sup>159</sup> CB LI, l. 24.

## Appendix: Primary Text Translations

### 'REX CELI DEUS'<sup>1</sup>

	*Rex, celi deus et dominus, qui tempora solus	King, God and Lord of Heaven, who alone
	*Condidit, et solus condita cuncta regit,	Established time, and alone creation
	*Qui rerum causas ex se produxit, et vnum	Rules, Himself the formal cause of all things,
	*In se principium rebus inesse dedit,	First Principle in Himself inhering,
5	*Qui dedit vt stabili motu consisteret orbis,	Who set our orb to rest in stable sway,
	*Fixus in eternum mobilitate sua,	Fixed eternally in mobility,
	*Quique potens verbi produxit ad esse creata,	Whose Word brought created things to be,
	*Quique sue mentis lege ligauit ea,	And bound them by the law of His own mind,
	Ipse caput regum, reges quo rectificantur,	Himself the head, rectifying all kings:
10	Te que tuum regnum, Rex pie, queso regat.	Pious king, I pray He may rule your reign.
	Grata superueniens te misit gracia nobis;	Free, supervening grace sent you to us;
	O sine labe salus nulla per ante fuit;	Before, no safety came without sickness;
	Sic tuus adventus nova gaudia sponte reduxit,	But your homecoming surprised us with joy,
	Quo prius in luctu lacrima maior erat.	Though lamenting and languishing in tears.
15	Nos tua milicia pauidos releuauit ab ymo,	Your knighthood raised us trembling from the depth,
	Quos prius oppressit ponderis omne malum.	Whom before every heavy evil pressed.
	Ex probitate tua quo mors latitabat in vmbra,	While Death hid in shadows from your brilliance,
	Vita resurrexit clara que regna regit.	Bright Life resurrected that which rules realms.
	Sic tua sors sortem mediante Deo renouatam	Your fate, thus, by God's aid our fate restores,

**‘REX CELI DEUS’<sup>1</sup>**

20	Sanat et emendat que prius egra fuit.  O pie rex, Cristum per te laudamus, et ipsum Qui tibi nos tribuit terra reviuu colit. Sancta sit illa dies qua tu tibi regna petisti, Sanctus et ille deus, qui tibi regna dedit,	Renews and heals what before was diseased.  O pious king, through you we praise Christ, God manifest in your revived England. Blessed be the day when you sought her rule, And blessed be the one God granting it,
25	Qui tibi prima tulit: confirmet regna futura,  Quo poteris magno magnus honore frui; Sit tibi progenies ita multiplicata per eum, Quod genus inde pium repleat omne solum; Quicquid in orbe boni fuerit tibi *summus ab alto	Paving your progress: may He your future  Prove, when your greatness basks in great esteem, And your heirs multiply the ages through So that a pious kind may fill all earth; May the Highest on high rain down all good
30	Donet, vt in terris rex in honore regas.  *Omne quod est turpe vacuum discedat, et omne *Est quod honorificum det deus esse tuum. *Consilium nullum, pie rex, te tangat iniquum, In quibus occultum scit deus esse dolum.	So that you might reign in earthly honour. May all evil depart empty-handed, And all merit God place in your good hands. May no base Counsel reach you, pious king, In whose unspoken part God hears treason.
35	Absit auaricia, ne tangat regia corda Nec queat *in terra proditor esse tua. *Sic tua processus habeat fortuna perhennes, Quo* recolant laudes secula cuncta tuas; Nuper vt *Augusti fuerant preconia Rome,	Away with Avarice, let her not touch Your royal heart, nor remain to betray. Thus, may your progress be perpetual, So that all ages might recall your deeds; As the rhetors of Rome praised Augustus,
40	Concinat in gestis Anglia leta tuis.	May happy England all together sing



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**'REX CELI DEUS'<sup>1</sup>**

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	*O tibi, rex, evo detur, fortissime, nostro	Of your deeds, mightiest king; in our age
	*Semper honorata sceptrā tenere manu:	May the sceptre always rest in your hand:
	Stes ita magnanimus, quod vbi tua regna gubernas	With liberality may you govern
	Terreat has partes hostica nulla manus;	That no hostile band ignite rebellion;
45	*Augeat Imperium tibi Cristus et augeat annos,	May Christ increase your power and your years,
	*Protegat et nostras aucta corona fores;	Protect us with strong gates shaped like your crown;
	Sit tibi pax finis, domito domineris in orbe,	Peace be your goal, lord o'er a mastered world,
	*Cunctaque sint humeris inferiora tuis:	And all lesser things fall beneath your sway:
	Sic honor et virtus, laus, gloria, pax que potestas	Thus may honor, strength, praise, glory, and peace
50	Te que tuum regnum magnificare queant.	Enable you and your reign to be great.
	Cordis amore tibi, pie Rex, mea vota parau;	With heartfelt love, pious king, I prepared
	Est qui servicii nil nisi velle michi,	A prayer, because I wish to be of use.
	Ergo tue laudi que tuo genuflexus honor,	Therefore, kneeling to your honour and praise,
	Verba loco doni pauper habenda tuli.	I, a poor man, offer words for a gift.
55	Est tamen ista mei, pie rex, sententia verbi:	And this, pious king, the sense of my speech:
	Fine tui regni sint tibi regna poli!	Your kingship o'er, may heavn's Kingdom be yours!

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<sup>1</sup> John Gower, 'Rex Celi Deus' in *The Complete Works of John Gower*, ed. by G.C. Macaulay, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), 4, pp. 343–44. In the left column, I present the poem according to Macaulay's edition, although I have added extra line numbers, changed the punctuation to represent a stronger delineation between phrases and clauses, and placed an asterisk next to lines or partial lines that RCD shares with the conclusion of the *Epistola ad regem*, as it appears in the VC 6, ll. 1159–1200. In the right column, I offer my own translation that turns Gower's (mostly) unrhyming elegiac distichs to a decasyllabic line. For a more literal translation, see 'Rex Celi Deus' in *John Gower: The Minor Latin Works with In Praise of Peace*, ed. and trans. by R.F. Yeager, Middle English Texts Series Online, <<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/rytxt7.htm>>. 8 August 2011.

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**'CAELI DEUS SANCITISSIME'**

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Celi deus sanctissime,	Most holy God of heaven,
Qui lucidum centrum poli	Who the bright region of the universe
Candore pingis igneo	Paints with fiery brilliance,
Augens decori lumine,	Adorning it with decorative light,
Quarto die qui flammeam	Thou, who on the fourth day
Solis rotam constituens,	Establishing the sun's flaming wheel,
Lunae ministras ordini	Attended to the course of the moon,
Vagos recursus siderum,	The recurring journeys of the stars,
Ut noctibus vel lumini	So that nights might be set off
Diremptionis terminum	In the beginning from day's end,
Primordiis et mensium	And of the months
Signum dares notissimum,	Thou might give a most familiar sign:
Illumina cor hominum,	Illuminate the heart of all humanity,
Absterge sordes mentium,	Wipe away impurities of the mind,
Resolve culpae vinculum,	Release the chain of guilt,
Everte moles criminum.	Dislodge the mass of crimes.

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<sup>1</sup> The Latin text on the right is reproduced according to Clemens Blume's edition. See 'Caeli Deus Sanctissime', no. 37 in *Analecta Hymnica*, ed. by Clemens Blume (Leipzig: Reisland, 1908), 36–37. The English translation on the right is my own. I have adapted the punctuation offered for the Latin text so as to demarcate clause and phrase structuring in English. For an example of a more liberal translation of the hymn that is appropriate for singing, see <<http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Hymni/CaeliDeus.html>>.

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**CINKANTE BALADES, XXXV (THE CHANÇOUN)**

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Saint Valentin plus qe null Emporer	St Valentine, lord of love's day, each year
Ad parlement et convocation	Convokes of all fowls a parliament:
Des toutz oiseals, qui viennent a son jour,	Feathered friends come with affections sincere
U la compaigne prent son compaignon	Where one toward her companion is bent
En droit amour, mais par comparison	In honest love. But I am not content:
D'ascune part ne puiss avoir la moie:	No bit of devotion enters my employ.
Qui soul remaint ne poet avoir grant joie.	Who remains alone cannot have great joy.
Com la fenix souleine est au sojour	As the phoenix rises in solo flight

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*CINKANTE BALADES, XXXV (THE CHANÇOUN)*<sup>1</sup>

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En Arabie celle regioun,	Throughout the region of Araby,
Ensi ma dame on droit de son amour	So my lady according to love's right
Souleine maint, ou si jeo vuill ou noun,	Remains alone, despite a wish from me.
N'ad cure de ma supplicacion,	She has no care for my heartfelt plea
Sique d'amour ne sai troever la voie:	And on love's path will not me deploy.
Qui soul remaint ne poet avoir grant joie	Who remains alone cannot have great joy.
O com nature est pleine de favour	O how nature is full of favour
A ceos oiseals q'ont lour eleccion	To those birds who have their selection!
O si jeo fuisse en droit de mon atour	O, instead of my own state, if I but were
En ceo soul cas de lour condicioun!	Like them, in just this case, their reflection!
Plus poet nature qe ne poet resoun	Cruel Nature bests Reason's objection;
En mon estat tresbien le sente et voie:	Passions and visions trouble this boy:
Qui soul remaint ne poet avoir grant joie	Who remains alone cannot have great joy.
Chascun Tercel gentil ad sa falcoun,	Each gentle tercel claims his falcon,
Mais jai faili de ceo qu'avoir voldroie.	But here I lack the one I'd most enjoy.
Ma dame, c'est le fin de mon chançoun,	My lady, this is the end of my song:
Qui soul remaint ne poet avoir grant joie	Who remains alone cannot have great joy.

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<sup>1</sup> This appendix copies CB XXXV as it appears in Macaulay, ed. *The Complete Works of John Gower*, 1, pp. 365–66. The facing English translation is my own.



## The *hortus conclusus* in Gower's Poems

The final poem of the *Cinkante Balades*, culminating prayers in the *Visio Anglie*, a contemplative retreat with black rosary beads in the *Confessio Amantis*, and a Life of the Virgin in the last section of the *Mirour de l'Omme* comprise a diversified set of Marian endings in Gower's works. The *Mirour de l'Omme* is likely the earliest extant poem in Gower's corpus, while the *Cinkante Balades* are possibly among his last: from the 1370s to the first decade of the 1400s Gower crafted Marian conclusions for a variety of poetic genres. This effort reflects Gower's long-lasting and steadfast devotion to the Virgin that was no doubt encouraged by residence at St Mary Overie Augustinian Priory. It also reveals the influence of rhetorical handbooks portraying the Virgin as bearer of the Word and mother of all discourse. Concluding several poems with an encomium or petition to the Virgin, Gower reaches the ultimate aim of his multifaceted rhetoric: to harness emotions in spurring an audience (whether the narrative self or others) in rational belief and right action.

This chapter will investigate the rhetorical strategies and purposes of these Marian endings, some as subtle and understated as the prayers that conclude the *Visio* and the *Confessio*, others as explicit and developed as the *Cinkante Balades*' final poem and the *Mirour de l'Omme*'s extended biography of the Virgin. These endings both encapsulate and deploy the principles of Marian rhetoric studied in Chapter Three; there we saw how Gower constructs his own style of Marian rhetoric for female speakers in the *Mirour* and *Confessio*, a virtuous approach to discourse that establishes the peace of Christ in ways that the masculine narrators of the *Mirour*, *Vox*, *Cronica* and the Prologue to the *Confessio* are unable to do. In the conclusions to several poems, Gower emphasizes the Virgin's power to resolve issues and create harmony, either through her own habits of devotion and speech or through her inspiration, flowing through the author's verse. Most of all, the Virgin's spiritual healing restores the cognitive capacities of frustrated masculine narrators: unrequited lovers in the *Cinkante Balades* and *Confessio Amantis* set aside a futile pursuit for the hope embodied in Mary; a terrified exile from the Uprising in the *Visio* achieves peace through Marian intercession; and the tortured sinner of the *Mirour* finds accord with God's plan while narrating the Virgin's life. To set the scene for these Marian endings, Gower plants a poetic garden, sometimes through descriptions of the glorious English springtime in the country named

'Mary's Dowry', sometimes through allusions to the Virgin's iconographical *flora*.<sup>1</sup> In this way, many of Gower's poems constitute a *hortus conclusus*: a fertile discursive plot enclosed in formal versification and linked to the Virgin's integrity.

Mary herself is the *hortus conclusus* and the *mater/ia* for Gower's invocations of the Word. Ever-virgin, her delectable flesh — represented by roses, lilies and the most delightful plants in creation — remains enclosed in the celestial garden that yields Jesus, the *fructus*.<sup>2</sup> Mary blossoms with the flowers of rhetoric that produce the divine Word, its scriptural fruit culled from the chaff to guide the faithful in God's path. Placing Mary in nature, since she bore its creator, many of Gower's poems begin with a garden scene: the *Mirour de l'Omme* with Eden, the *Visio Anglie* with verdant England before the Uprising, the *Cinkante Balades* with the transition from barren winter to flowery summer, and the *Confessio Amantis* with the woodland green.<sup>3</sup> While none of these settings depicts a walled garden, the architectural counterpart of Mary's virgin womb, circular poetic structures substitute for material boundaries.<sup>4</sup> Some of these poems will return to the garden: the *Mirour* to the grove of trees supplying epithets for the Virgin, the *Cinkante Balades* to various seasonal landscapes reflecting the lovers' moods, and the *Confessio* to the '[d]espiled' stalks of Amans's youth.<sup>5</sup> In the turning of his life to dry stubble, Amans finds (as does the horrified narrator of the *Visio* after the Uprising) that even flourishing plants and such beauteous natural sites as England in springtide may become a wilderness echoing with a *vox clamantis* exiled from human love and law. In these instances, the hero or speaker must await the Virgin's holy domestication of the wild space that ushers in the conclusion of the poem.

1 On England as 'Mary's Dowry', see M. Elvins, 'Mary's Dowry', *The Ransommer*, 32.5 (1993), 8–15.

2 The image of Mary as a *hortus conclusus* is based on Marian interpretations of the Song of Songs in which the beloved is described as 'a garden enclosed' (4.12). On this image's translation to material and verbal arts, see Brian E. Daley, 'The "Closed Garden" and the "Sealed Fountain": Song of Songs 4.12 in the Late Medieval Iconography of Mary', in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. by Elisabeth Blair MacDougall (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986), pp. 253–78.

3 MO, ll. 85–169; VA, ll. 17–124; CB II, ll. 1–4; CA 1, ll. 98–116.

4 For a treatment of medieval gardens and the architecture surrounding them, see Christopher Taylor, 'Medieval Ornamental Landscapes', *Landscapes*, 1 (2000), 38–55.

5 MO, ll. 29923–24. In this passage on the properties of the Virgin's names, more garden imagery appears. For instance, Mary is also called the 'rose without thorn' and the 'fleur-de-lis' in ll. 29929–30. CB lyrics invoking a landscape in various seasons include the following poems and more: XIII is set in March; XV in May, XXXII and XXXIII at the beginning of the new year, XXXIII and XXXV on Valentine's Day. In addition, XXXVI and XXXVII point to the green fields of May and the lady's status as a rose, while the farewell poem XL mentions that it seems to be winter rather than summer now. Toward the conclusion of the *Confessio Amantis*, Amans's life is described as if it were a '[d]espiled' garden in winter. See CA 8, l. 2856.

Eleanor Johnson has argued that 'waste appears "piecemeal" in medieval texts, rarely as a central theme or affixed to an organized interpretive schema',<sup>6</sup> but Gower seems to be deploying untamed, desiccated, and blasted landscapes as representations of the poet's or humanity's need for the Virgin's restoration. In Gower's poetry, the flowers of Marian rhetoric revitalize grounds overrun by those pursuing unreasonable desires.

Although all Gower's Marian landscapes derive from textual sources, they also invoke plants often growing in English plots or parks familiar in the English countryside. The *Mirour* may borrow from Genesis, the *Visio* from Ovid's *Fasti*, *Metamorphosis*, and *Tristia*, the *Cinkante Balades* and *Confessio Amantis* from romance seasonal motifs; however, each is a believable native scene. Since England is 'Mary's Dowry', this native scene is a Marian landscape.<sup>7</sup> The *Mirour* features the apple tree, the *Visio* violets, lilies, and roses, the *Cinkante Balades* leafy enclosures with clusters of birds, and the *Confessio* a 'swote green pleine'.<sup>8</sup> Each extended description recalls associations in composition handbooks between writing and nature's creation of seasonal beauties and between gardens and the Virgin Mary's enclosed body. As Geoffrey of Vinsauf, deploying the Horatian dictum 'ut pictura poesis', comments: 'When you adorn something [in poetry], you paint [... as s]pringtime paints the earth with flowers.'<sup>9</sup> Gower's adornment of his textual earth with flowers and other greenery surrounding the first couple, the Kentish rebels, or assorted lovers foregrounds an important element of his rhetoric: the practice of situating disorderly actions amidst vibrant growth that sags or withers in contact with vehement feelings — and then undergoes regeneration once within a Marian enclosure. The Original Sin of Adam and Eve, the violent outbreak of the English underclasses, the fluctuating emotions of the ballades' several lovers, and the inappropriate impulses of Amans reveal an untended

6 Eleanor Johnson, 'The Poetics of Waste: Medieval English Ecocriticism', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 127.3 (May 2012), 461. For further ecocritical scholarship on the literature of late medieval England, see Gillian Rudd, *Greenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2011). On literary symbolism for medieval gardens, see, for instance, Derek Pearsall, 'Gardens as Symbol and Setting in Late Medieval Poetry', in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. by Elisabeth Blair MacDougall (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986), pp. 235–52; Anne Winston-Allen, 'Gardens of Heavenly and Earthly Delight: Medieval Gardens of the Imagination', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 99.1 (1998), 83–92.

7 For helpful books on medieval gardens, see: Teresa McLean, *Medieval English Gardens* (Lingfield: Beach Hut Books, 1981); Elisabeth Blair MacDougall, ed. *Medieval Gardens* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986); Sylvia Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden* (London: British Museum Press, 1995).

8 CA 1, l. 113.

9 PN, 44. The original Latin is *Ornatum faciens, pingis [...]* *Tempora veris Pingere flore*. See Edmond Faral, ed., *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle: recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Champion, 1924), pp. 787–92.

internal garden that must be pruned in a Marian conclusion. Associated in exegesis, litanies, and lyrics with the primrose, lily, and grapevine, with the bodily integrity supported by her ever-virginal state, and with the advanced reasoning capacity made possible by her sustained focus on God and skill at hedging the garden of her own soul, the Virgin Mary is the *hortus conclusus* suggesting Gower's poetic arrangement and containment.

Gower planted a variety of Marian gardens, with varying approaches to descriptions of *flora* and the fruitful Virgin. The subtlest Marian conclusions, those of the *Visio* and *Confessio* in which 'John' prays to the Virgin for political and personal resolution, depict powerful nature scenes that reinforce Mary's presence. The *Visio* paints the Virgin's roses, lilies, and violets blossoming in the English spring before the Uprising, and when the rebels tramp upon the blooms, the tempestuous sea over which Mary rules. As the upper classes sail away in a ship looking like the Tower, Mary becomes the *Stella Maris* who guides the roiling populace to safer harbour. Here, the Marian conclusion is not as emphatic as in the *Mirour* or *Cinkante Balades* because 'John' is still lamenting the English people's lack of devotion and preparing to warn them about their sins in the ensuing books. In the *Confessio Amantis*, where the Virgin's final entry is oblique and understated, readers can smell the sweet grass where lovers languish for Marian mercy but instead confront Mary's less compassionate counterpart, Venus. The *Confessio's* May-time mead is a standard setting for late medieval romance that generally funnels the secular lover into the walled garden of erotic attainment, but in the *Confessio's* case, the suitor finds his prayer garden in a gift of rosary beads.<sup>10</sup> Opening with the Johanne Prologue, the *Confessio's* Book 1 places the narrator — no longer 'John' whose namesakes are the Baptist and Evangelist, but Amans the unrequited lover — in a woodland meadow, where he cries out to Venus in false hope of her mediation. Garden scenes and Marian supplications bracket the Middle English poem, while the Marian rhetoricians we have studied (Peronelle and Thaise) deliver oratory just inside the brackets. The final book of the *Confessio* includes a formal supplication to Venus, the discovery that the body and spirit of Amans have withered, and the lover's retreat to pray for England on a new gift of rosary beads, a Marian garden carved for his private devotions.

While in Gower's poems with understated Marian endings, the Mother's presence comes to full flower, the poems that amplify most on Marian matter as a strategy for closure contain the least landscape imagery — just enough to invoke a lost Eden or the Virgin's role as Christ's bride. The *Cinkante Balades* delves into garden scenes in all seasons, but

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<sup>10</sup> McClean, *Medieval English Gardens*, pp. 124–25. According to McClean, 'The connection between Christian rosary beads and the medieval rosary or rose-garden was made in Europe some time in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries' (p. 132).



its final poem, dedicated to the Virgin and completely focusing on her, eschews references to the landscape as it contrasts Mary's stable love with the riotous emotions of those who inhabit courtly lawns. On the way to poem LI the *Cinkante Balades* offers several verses that reflect either on the flora and fauna surrounding a masculine narrator or on his entreaties to a beloved, who turns out to be a poor substitute for the Virgin Mary. In the previous chapter, we saw that poems bursting with birds and buds often set vibrant nature in contrast with suitors in fortune's grips. Amid these poems, various ladies are described in Marian terms; for instance, ballade IIII names a lady awaiting her marriage as 'the flower of flowers', and XV shows the first suitor 'praying' to a withdrawing lady's 'ymage'.<sup>11</sup> Providing closure to the *Cinkante Balades*, a poem praising the Virgin brings this poetic cycle concerning gardens and exalted ladies full circle — and (without further nature imagery) locks the garden gate. The *Mirour de l'Omme*, whose Marian ending is the most elaborate of all Gower's works — a full biography of the Virgin — uses portraits of nature seldom enough that its final catalogue of Marian plants shocks the reader with a heady aroma. When in the beginning of the French poem Gower recalls Paradise and the Original Sin that launches an extended consideration of Sin's daughters, the poet mostly leaves the reader to imagine the buds of Eden. Nevertheless, the brief setting sufficiently establishes the need for the Marian Virtues, whose rhetoric we studied in Chapter Three, and for Mary, rose without thorn, to root out the nettles entrapping Adam and Eve. In the conclusion to the poem, the narrator poses himself as the everyman requiring the Mother's mediation and as the Evangelist-like curator of her life story, who prays to Mary as the flower of all flowers.

As we consider the diversity of Gower's Marian endings, we might liken it to the poet's experimentation in the Trentham Manuscript with letters and music. Throughout Gower's Marian conclusions are divergent presentations of the Virgin's and the narrators' place in burgeoning creation. For instance, both the philosophical narrator of ballade LI and Amans are reacquainted with their reasoning abilities when they turn their love to the Virgin, and yet the ballade narrator stands outside of nature while Amans is wallowing in the grass. The Virgin's connection to nature corresponds to her central purpose in each of the poems: in the *Visio* to quell the rebellious tempest raging against England and in 'John's' heart, in the *Confessio* to offer a spiritual abode for Amans that is alternative to Venus's green, in the *Cinkante Balades* to halt the lovers' drama that has been set in grassy scenes, and in the *Mirour* to reverse the unnatural propagation of sin. These purposes direct the Virgin's flight from England's springtime and her command over the turbulent sea in the *Visio*, her beckoning to

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<sup>11</sup> CB IIII, l. 22; CB XV, l. 25.

Amans transfixed upon the lovers' plain in the *Confessio*, her alliance with Reason against unbridled woodland capers in the *Cinkante Balades*, and her identification with plants and trees symbolizing her intimacy with Christ in the *Mirour*. If the Virgin removes herself and her devotees from the landscape in some of Gower's verse, it is to offer the substitute of her own well-tended garden.

## Mary, Garden of Language

The organic matter issuing forth the Word, Mary is a divine garden of language. Middle English lyrics proclaiming the Annunciation often set Mary amidst a garden while she awaits the Word's conception or birth. Although medieval material arts frequently place a reading or spinning Mary in an enclosed space — a private chamber or narrow chapel — before Gabriel arrives, the popular Middle English lyrics develop the outdoor scene from the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James* in which the Virgin meets the angel by a well and gives birth to Jesus in a cave.<sup>12</sup> As I show in *Scribit Mater: Mary and the Language Arts in the Literature of Medieval England*, lyrics such as 'I Syng of a Myden' and 'Maiden in the Mor Lay' connect the Annunciation Feast of March 25 and the Marian muse with spring settings and songs, with primroses, crystal springs, and the dewy grass at dawn.<sup>13</sup> Gower would have encountered these lyrics in various ways: jotted in manuscripts, sung as antiphons in church, carolled about the commons, or recited by itinerant Franciscan preachers. He would have known from the Visitation story in the Book of Luke and from the rosary prayer that, positioned among flowering plants in the lyrics, the Virgin is herself a garden whose womb yields the 'fructus' (fruit) of the infant Jesus.<sup>14</sup> Bearing the Christ child in her holy plot, Mary is both similar and contrary to nature, given the paradox of the Virgin Birth. As a corollary, the gorgeous imagery establishing her as a garden derives from landscape features both natural and textual: from the Song of Songs, early Christian archetypes like the rose and Gideon's fleece, French *reverdie*, romance depictions of court gardens, and more.

Gower would have learned to view the Virgin's fertility as linguistically productive from thirteenth-century handbooks on the liberal arts such

12 *Protoevangelium of James*, trans. M. R. James in *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924) XL, 1–2; XVIII–XIX: <<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/infancyjames-mrjames.html>>, accessed 2022.

13 Georgiana Donavin, *Scribit Mater: Mary and the Language Arts in the Literature of Medieval England* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), pp. 233–34.

14 In Luke 1. 42, Mary's cousin Elizabeth, upon the arrival of the Virgin, shouts 'Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!' This joyful greeting becomes the centre of the rosary prayer.

as the *Epithalamium Beate Virginis Marie* of John of Garland, a text most likely known to both Gower and Chaucer, as was discussed in Chapter Three.<sup>15</sup> Although there is no record concerning which of the *artes poetriae* might have taught poetic craft to Gower, there are allusions to the *Poetria Nova*, we have noted, in the Dedicatory Epistle to the *Vox Clamantis* and indications in his recurring treatment of the Virgin that Gower knew some of the Marian poetic arts.<sup>16</sup> Along with the *Epithalamium*, John of Garland wrote the *Parisiana Poetria*, a composition textbook for poetry and prose that informs our paradigm for Marian rhetoric and models different types of meters through verses on the Virgin.<sup>17</sup> In addition, another English author of the *artes poetriae*, Gervais of Melkley, treats the Virgin Mother as a well of literary devices in his *Ars versificaria*.<sup>18</sup> John of Garland wrote for university students at Paris and Toulouse, and Gervais taught Latin to beginners in unknown circumstances, but both believed the Virgin to be the font of poetic rhetoric.

The *Parisiana Poetria* associates the Virgin's inviolate body with the integrity of various meters and rhymes. It proposes three hymns on the Virgin's conception as illustrations for three kinds of quantitative meter: the Asclepiad, Sapphic Adonic, and iambic dimeter. In addition to the triple, metrical discourse on the immaculate conception, Marian lines dominate the long list of examples for the eight categories of rhymed poems and hybrid types constructed by intermingling them. Many of John's sample verses derive from the *Epithalamium Beate Virginis Marie*, suggesting that he might have taught these texts together and that readers like Gower should consider them together. If the *Epithalamium* explains all the liberal arts by examples from the Virgin's life, the *Parisiana Poetriae* advances the best means of written expression through verse examples praising the Virgin. A Marian wheel demonstrating an AB rhyme pattern, found in several manuscripts of the *Parisiana Poetria*, and presented in

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15 John of Garland, *Epithalamium Beate Virginis Marie*, ed. and trans. by Antonio Saiani (Florence: Olschiki, 1995). Evelyn Faye Wilson, 'A Study of the Epithalamium in the Middle Ages: An Introduction to the *Epithalamium beate Marie virginis* of John of Garland' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California Berkeley, 1930). Donavin, *Scribit Mater*, pp. 87–100. A discussion of Chaucer's and Gower's knowledge of the *Epithalamium* occurs in Chapter Three of this book.

16 For general background on the *artes poetriae*, see, for instance, James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1974), pp. 135–93; and Douglas Kelly, *The Arts of Poetry and Prose* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991).

17 John of Garland, *The Parisiana Poetria of John of Garland*, ed. by Traugott Lawler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

18 Hans-Jürgen Gräbener, ed., *Gervais von Melkley: Ars Poetica* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1965). Catherine Yodice Giles, ed. and trans., *Gervais of Melkley's Treatise on the Art of Versifying and the Method of Composing in Prose: Translation and Commentary* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Rutgers University, 1973).

Chapter Three of this book, reinforces the principle that the Virgin's chastity, rendering her body a *hortus conclusus*, is a lovely garden for the study of rhyme and rhythm. (Figure 2 above) 'Creatura est beata' ('The created one [the Virgin] was blessed') begins the rhyming verses that, on the wheel's margins, position the Virgin at the centre of all natural and verbal creation; 'puella castitatis' ('chaste girl') begins the verses that equate the Virgin's attributes with poetic craft in the wheel's centre. In the Marian wheel John of Garland shows that principles shaping various kinds of rhyme are an offshoot of the principles of creation, brought to fruition in both the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the Virgin Birth of Christ. Verse structures are one method for embellishing discourses, and in the Marian wheel, the Virgin herself is a model of ornamentation. 'Sacrata est ornata' ('the sanctified [Mary] was adorned'), the wheel declares, equating the Mother, consecrated by the Word in her womb, with ornate expressions. Considering the application of such discourse wheels, Kimberly A. Rivers suggests in her analysis of similar diagrams meant to aid preachers that it may be a mnemonic tool.<sup>19</sup> If this is the case, John of Garland's Marian wheel expresses three kinds of encircling containment: the Christ child in the Virgin's womb, a poem in the constraints of repetitive rhyme and meter, and Marian rhetorical principles in the student's memory. By deploying verses on the Virgin to demonstrate the alignment of sexual and verbal control, John of Garland raises up Mary as the queen of meter, rhyme, and rhythm and, in the words of Robin R. Hass, 'invokes Mary as a linguistic saviour'.<sup>20</sup> The Marian wheel, with its prompts for rhymed verses inside an enclosed circle, both suggests an enclosed garden of language and provides the seeds for more poetic flowering when authors such as Gower invent their own verses from Garland's principles.

Like the *Parisiana Poetria*, Gervais of Melkley's *Ars versificaria* teaches the composition of poetry through Marian exemplars. Having written a verse encomium to the Virgin, Gervais included it in his *Ars* as a model of various rhetorical strategies imparted in the textbook. In a manuscript of rhetorical arts now in Glasgow and edited by Bruce Harbert, the encomium occurs before the *Ars versificaria*, while in later manuscripts the poem is positioned as a culminating model of all the instruction on verse that has gone before.<sup>21</sup> Most of Gervais's Marian lines emphasize the Virgin's fertility in giving birth to the Christ child in imitable phrases:

19 Kimberly A. Rivers, *Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice: Memory, Images, and Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), p. 168.

20 Robin R. Hass, 'Archetypus, Imaginatio, and Inventio: The Poet as Artifex and the Creation of a Feminized Language, Subject, and Text, *Ennaratio*, 4 (1997), 27.

21 Here, I would like to honour the memory of Alan Rosiene and to acknowledge my gratitude for his expertise on the manuscripts of the *Ars versificaria*. This discussion depends upon his insight that Gervais probably wrote the Marian poem in advance of his poetic treatise as an advertisement of his grammatical and pedagogical skills. The order of Gervais's texts in the

two of his demonstrations of antithesis, for instance, include 'virgo parit filium' (the virgin gives birth to the son) and 'fecunda virginitas' (fecund virginity).<sup>22</sup> As Robert Glendinning explains, the Virgin's fecundity points to the 'ultimate oxymoron [...] which is impossible but nevertheless true' and which is a governing trope of much Christian discourse.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the very last lines of the *Ars versificaria* that demonstrate the principles of poetry recall that Mary is the flower of all sweet-smelling fruit.<sup>24</sup> Here, the 'fructus' is Christ and those born in him; the 'flos' the site of incarnation, Christian rebirth, and figures of speech, or the 'flowers' of rhetoric. With their emphasis on the linguistically productive Virgin who cultivates a poetic garden, John of Garland or Gervais of Melkley — or both — could have inspired John Gower to compose his own *horti conclusi*.

While thirteenth-century *artes poetriae* directly present the Virgin as the source of fruitful language and a model for textual enclosure, Gower most likely learned from a variety of discourses that a petition is the key to Mary's linguistic garden. Regular recitation of the rosary beseeching her mediation, hymns invoking the Mother's mercy, and miracle stories in which a penitent calls upon the Virgin's aid all present the petition as the way to capture Mary's attention. In addition, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* from which most medieval students learned the basic principles for a discourse's arrangement, gives advice on conclusions that might be effectively applied to Marian endings.<sup>25</sup> The *ad Herennium* states that according to the Greeks, conclusions to forensic speeches should be tripartite, including a summary, amplification on the major topics, and an appeal to pity; such an appeal could be easily adapted to a prayer for the Mother's mercy.<sup>26</sup> Rhetorical practice for forensic speeches finds a counterpart in appeals to the Virgin because both are delivered before a court of justice, one before a civil judge and another before the judgement seat in heaven, where Mary's pleas to Christ for leniency take their cue from the level of the sinner's devotion to the Mother. According to the pre-Christian *ad Herennium*, a concluding appeal to pity might include complaints against fortune, an entreaty to a particular group or person whose pity is desired, and an ensuing declaration that the speaker is at their mercy.<sup>27</sup> With the exception to the complaint against fortune, the *ad Herennium*'s advice speaks well to the poet authoring a Marian conclusion. Fortune has no place, Gower often argues, when the sinner comes before God and the saints:

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Hunterian manuscript is presented in Bruce Harbert, ed., *A Thirteenth-Century Anthology of Rhetorical Poems* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1975).

22 Harbert, *Anthology*, 177. 4, 5.

23 Glendinning, 'Eros, Agape, and Rhetoric', p. 908.

24 Gräbener, *Gervais von Melkley*, 230.10.

25 *Ad Her*, II. xxx. 47.

26 *Ad Her*, II. xxxi. 50.

27 *Ad Her*, II. xxxi. 50.

entreaties to the Virgin assume the same human agency to reverse sin that Mary herself proved at the Annunciation and elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> Prayerfully requesting the Virgin's aid countermands a belief in Fortune and stops the goddess's ever-turning wheel with a perfect Marian circle expressing the unity and integrity of God's creation. Like the *ad Herennium*, the Ciceronian dictaminal theory informing Gower's literary letters seems to influence the placement and context of these agency-assuming petitions to the Virgin. Gower adapts that theory in 'Rex Celi Deus' and several of the *Cinkante Balades* in order to locate the petition within a delayed salutation; in this way an entreaty is made while the narrator underscores his status as a supplicant entreating a benefactor. In Gower's letters a salutation and petition complete the epistle, just as Gower's *hortus conclusus* concludes with an appeal to the Virgin and a petition for her love and aid. Thus, by introducing himself to the Virgin Mother in the end and throwing himself upon her mercy, Gower's narrator encloses a Marian garden with a personal key.

We will begin our analysis of how Gower's petitions to the Virgin enclose his poetic *horti conclusi* by examining the most subtle and understated Marian endings, those of the *Visio Anglie* and *Confessio Amantis*. From there we will proceed to Gower's conclusions in the *Cinkante Balades* and *Mirour de l'Omme* that most overtly and fully venerate the Virgin.

## 'John' and Stella Maris

From Canto 17 until its final verses, the *Visio Anglie* offers Marian petitions for the transformation of terror to good hope. 'John' claims Stella Maris as his spiritual guide, relies on the Virgin's intercession, and in the end credits her with saving his life.<sup>29</sup> Throughout the *Visio* the perambulating 'John' exists between the 'mad rage' of the rebellious peasants and the storm of self-accusation.<sup>30</sup> Assaulted by intense emotions, he travels through various political and spiritual settings connected to the Virgin — through England's Mary garden to the sea over which she reigns as Stella Maris to a 'chided earth' upon which 'John' cultivates the rose without thorn in

28 In the Prologue to the CA, Gower states an argument that he develops across his trilingual oeuvre: 'man is overall / His oghne cause of wel and wo / That we fortune clepe so / Out of the man himself it growth [...]': (humanity is overall / Its own cause of weal and woe / That which we call fortune / Grows out of humankind [...]) (ll. 546–49). On the way in which Gower pits fortune against the Virgin, see Maura Nolan, 'Agency and the Poetics of Sensation in Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*', in *Answerable Style: The Idea of the Literary in Medieval England*, ed. by Frank Grady and Andrew Galloway (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), pp. 214–43.

29 VA 17, ll. 1615–16; VA 18, ll. 1833–34; VA 21, ll. 2083–84.

30 VA 14, l. 1133: *furor insane*.

his own heart.<sup>31</sup> By crafting expressions of trust in the Word and Mary's delivery of it, 'John' finally obtains peace and the ability to bring others to reason by exposing their sins in the continuation of the *Vox Clamantis*.

Beginning with the springtime flourishing of the rose and the balm in 'Mary's Dowry', 'John' wanders in bliss, dazzled by riotous colour and breathing in flowery perfume. Praising the headiness of this sensory paradise with a rich confluence of textual allusions, he merges Edenic images with lines from the *Fasti*'s Cerealia and Floralia. Night comes, however, veiling this splendour in darkness and eventually breaking his sleep with fear. In his dream marauding animals — the peasant-monsters of the Uprising — wreak havoc in the woodlands as well as in London. What was before an Eden becomes a fallen wilderness in which the *vox clamantis* can be heard, and the narrator's deep happiness devolves to fainting horror. Although his former reality was grounded in a lovely prelapsarian Mary garden, the Uprising initiates prophetic dreaming of sin and 'John's' search for spiritual guidance. Unable to find a safe dwelling place in his vision of the despoiled land, he joins other nobles escaping in a ship headed out to sea. A journey toward the water inevitably leads to divine purification and protection for 'John', who is associated with both the waters of baptism and the seas of apocalyptic destruction that will finally yield up the Second Coming of Christ. 'John' follows the Virgin, who seems to have concentrated her presence upon the waves, after her flowers have been trampled in the fields and London's walls have been breached. Committing himself to her care, the narrator who identifies with the one leaping in Elizabeth's womb at the Virgin's voice now cries out pitifully: 'Star of the Sea, go first across the waves; / Take care of me; with you as guide I'm safe.'<sup>32</sup>

A rhetorical tour de force compares this boat steered by the Virgin to the Tower and links this monument to the towers of Ilium as well as the Tower of Babylon and the ship associated with the prophet Jonah. Deploying anaphora in his signature reiterative style,<sup>33</sup> 'John' establishes these connections while underscoring a contrast between this fortification's former strength and current destruction:

31 VA 21, l. 2127: *Castigauit eam dominus [...]*.

32 VA 17, ll. 1615–16: *Tu michi, stella maris, sis preuia, quo fera<r> vndis; / Sit tibi cura mei; te duce tutus ero.*

33 David Carlson tracks the anaphoric couplets that occur throughout the *Visio* in imitation of both Ovidian anaphora (evident in the *Visio*'s Ovidian cento) and of Nigel Witeker's *Speculum Stultorum*. See the Commentary on the *Visio Anglie* in *John Gower: Poems on Contemporary Events*, ed. by David Carlson and trans. by A. G. Rigg (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2011), p. 190, n. 623–24. The anaphoric couplets are a striking feature of both Gower's plain style and his more elaborate Latin verses.

The tower — where strength gives way to feebleness;  
 The tower — where virtue is of no avail;  
 The tower — which sighs for help, its guard removed  
 And left alone and lacking counsel's aid.  
 The tower — foul parricide, defiled by blood,  
 Whose ruined fame flies for eternity.  
 The tower — where leopard's cave was broken wide,  
 And driven out he left like gentle lamb.  
 The tower — whose dirty Tile oppressed the crown,  
 Where mighty head was felled by feeble foot.  
 The tower — not scented healthily but sick,  
 In grief, not joyfully, it bore its woes.  
 The tower, like Babylon, is split in tongues;  
 The tower — like ship, in Tharsis's ocean's mouth.<sup>34</sup>

In the chain of allegories above, the 'foul parricide' (*paracida*) denotes the slaying of father Simon Sudbury, the archbishop of Canterbury, whom 'John' renames the Bishop Helenus of Troy in the *Visio*.<sup>35</sup> In the figurative patchwork relating the fall of Troy to that of London,<sup>36</sup> the reference to the leopard conjures Richard II's heraldry and a leadership much in decline from that of Priam and Hector. Scriptural allusions comment on the immorality of that decline, figured in the Tower of Babylon from Genesis and the ship of Tharsis, an Old Testament symbol of greed and corrupt riches in Isaiah and the Psalms.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the ship of Tharsis launches Jonah on his dubious prophetic mission.<sup>38</sup> With scriptural and legendary associations with the Tower, 'John' not only accuses the English monarchy of pride, but also likens his own failed prophetic works to those of Jonah. Both the seer and the nation are in need of direction from the *Stella Maris*.

Among the Tower's many associations, it represents London's unmoored foundations, which, according to 'John', cry out like a woman in despair. He describes the City of London under the rebels' onslaught: 'Then to my right I thought I saw New Troy: / It languished like a widow,

34 VA 18, ll. 1751–66: *Turris, vbi vires succumbunt debilitati; / Turris, vbi virtus non iuuat vlla viros; / Turris, in auxilium spirans, custode remote, / Et sine consilio sola relicta sibi. / Turris in obprobrium patricidaeque sanguine feda, / Cuius ineterna fama remorsa volat. / Turris, vbi rupta spelunca fuit leopardi, / Ipseque compulsus vt pius agnus abit. / Turris, vbi pressit vi tegula feda coronam, / Quo cecidit fragile sub pede forte caput. / Turris, non thuris olefacta salute sed egra, / Lugens non ludens, tedia queque ferens. / Turris, diuisa linguis Babylonis ad instar; / Turris, v test nauis Tharsis in ore maris.*

35 VA 14, l. 1002.

36 VA 17, ll. 1743–44: *O quam tunc similis huic naui Londoniarum / Turris erat [...]* (How like that ship the Tower of London was) [...].

37 Genesis 11. 1–9; Isaiah 2. 12 and 16–17; Psalm 47. 4–9.

38 Jonah 1.3–4. See Carlson, *Commentary on the Visio Anglie*, p. 232.



filled with grief. / Once strong in walls, now, wall-less, it lay bare; / No gate could use its bars to close itself'.<sup>39</sup> The depredation of faithful womanhood requires a Marian recuperation. London, like Troy, has collapsed in a struggle involving sexual transgressions — the kidnapping of Helen or the battering of the bereft woman's 'gates'. According to Sylvia Federico, 'The fantasy of the city as an utterly powerless widow turns the invading rebels into rapists [...]':<sup>40</sup> The *Visio*, like Walsingham's chronicle, blames the revolt — at least partially — on the gross lusts of the people, which only the Virgin can transcend.<sup>41</sup> According to Federico, 'By allegorizing his city as a chaste and vulnerable widow, Gower attempts to smooth over London's internal conflicts in a mirage of completion, to construct cohesive boundaries, and explain away violations of those boundaries in terms of the sexual impropriety of outsiders'.<sup>42</sup> Entering the ship and sailing into troubled and uncharted waters is one way of figuring a lack of borders, a heaving mass of chaos. With her virginal integrity and moral compass, the *Stella Maris* can impose form on disorder and show the righteous way upon the dark and heaving waters. Imagining that he will die, 'John' entreats, 'May she who cherished man by bearing Christ / Provide the means by which I may be saved!'<sup>43</sup>

Mary's intercession is required for Christ to accept the beautiful prayer, composed at what the narrator believes to be the hour of his death. The orison honours the creative, formative, and ordering power of the Word from which the narrator derives the shape and style of his own speech. It begins:

Creator of mankind, redeemer Christ,  
Without whom nothing good or better's done  
And, as you said, your word established all —  
You ordered, and at once all things were made;

39 VA 13, ll. 879–82: *A dextrisque nouam me tunc vidisse putabam / Troiam, que vidue languida more fuit. / Que solet ex muris cingi patuit sine muro, / Nec potuit seras claudere porta suas.*

40 Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 9.

41 Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley, 2 vols (London: Longman Green, 1863), 1, p. 459.

42 Federico, *New Troy*, p. 6. Bellamy, *Translations of Power: Narcissism and the Unconscious in Epic History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 34. Elizabeth J. Bellamy observes that the desire for English chastity and integrity is complicated by the comparison to Troy, which involves an unrealistic return to cultural 'wholeness' through references to origins, but also the threat of fragmentation in another Fall of Troy.

43 VA 18, ll. 1833–4: *Que genus humanum curauit origine Cristi, / Materiam cure prebeat illa mee!*

The heavens took their shape just by your word  
Your spirit thence gave beauty to it all.<sup>44</sup>

The opening of this prayer can be compared to the exalted language of 'Rex Celi Deus', which, as we have seen, also bears upon the linguistically productive capacities of the Word. However, the prayer to Christ in Canto 18 of the *Visio Anglie* does not emphasize God's control of temporality as did 'Rex Celi Deus', invested as the latter poem is in demonstrating that Henry IV acceded to the throne in the fullness of time. Instead, the *Visio Anglie*'s supplication dwells upon structure and beauty, as the Word becomes the foundation of poetic invention. Continuing with a reverse Annunciation, 'John' begs the Lord that his petition for forgiveness might 'penetrate inside your godly ears'; while Mary was sometimes believed to have been impregnated through the ear when Gabriel delivered God's message, 'John' fills God's ears with the redemptive hope invested in Mary.<sup>45</sup> Since Mary delivered the Word to humanity, 'John' relies upon her to deliver his words to the heavenly court.

Trusting that Mary will intercede by bringing his words to the Word, 'John' declares that the incarnation through the 'virgin's flesh' will 'rescue [a] man from death'.<sup>46</sup> 'John' hopes for a milder end to his life than a struggle upon the waves, and lo, with Mary's powerful intervention, 'God blocked the ocean's raging jaws'.<sup>47</sup> Relief comes through a divine blow to the Uprising: Mayor William kills Wat Tyler, the Jay whose rebellious oratory is inimical to Gower's. Both the release from danger and the extermination of Tyler calm the spiritual sea of troubles and remind 'John' that Jesus walked upon water, dispelled the disciples' fears, and stilled the raging waves.<sup>48</sup> It is through the authority of Jesus's voice that both biblical and present miracles occur, 'John' claims: 'A reviving vigour came from the mouth of God; / Already waning, I revived at his Word [...]'.<sup>49</sup> In this passage of the *Visio*, the Word commands the continuing action of creation, birth, death, and the rebirth experienced by 'John' and countermands all

44 VA 18. 1793–98: *Conditor O generis humani, Criste redemptor, / Est sine quo Melius n<il ve>l in orbe bonum; / Dixistique tuo sunt omnia condita verbo; / Mandastique statim cuncta create patent; / Inque tuo verbo celi formantur, et omnem / Spiritus ornatum fecerat inde tuus.*

45 VA 18, ll. 1827–28: *O cui fundo preces, te deprecor, intr<e>t in aures / Hec me<a> diuinas vox lacrimosa tuas.*

46 VA 18, ll. 1811–12: *Sed pietate tibi quod eum de morte resumas / Virginis ex carne tu caro factus eras [...].*

47 VA 19, l. 1864: *deus obstruit ora maris.*

48 VA 19, ll. 1905–20; Matthew 14. 22–36, Mark 6. 45–56, John 6. 16–24.

49 VA 19, ll. 1898–99: *Tantus celesti venit ab ore vigor; / Et iam deficiens sic ad sua verba reuixi [...].* I use my own, more literal, translation of this passage, since it highlights Gower's reference to the Word, where Rigg's translation emphasizes Jesus's voice: 'So great a power came from heaven's voice; / Late failing, at its voice I came to life'.

spiritual dangers. 'John' is both reborn in Jesus's miraculous Word and bearing words made possible by the Virgin's salvific intercession.

'John's enjoyment of God's comforts will not be complete, however, either in the *Visio* or the ensuing books of the *Vox* because there is still reason to lament the wickedness of his once Edenic homeland. In the conclusion of the *Visio* his ship ports in lawless Britain — not to a contained Marian garden but to a wasteland — and anxiety returns. While London was a widow grieving as the Tower towed away from the rebel port, at the conclusion the tearful *vox clamantis* sheds womanly tears. 'John' compares his state to a mother in travail: 'My pain at heart was just like giving birth. / As I lament, tears follow on my own words [...]'.<sup>50</sup> As 'John' internalizes feminine anguish and 'gives birth' to lamentations on the state of England, he paradoxically gains a more spiritual perspective on political chaos that could be described as Marian hope amidst excruciating pain. Again, the 'verba' of heaven offer consolation for his sorrowful outpourings, and he credits the Virgin Mother with his newfound peace and understanding.<sup>51</sup> 'I sing a song of praise to God with joy. / To Mary, ocean's star, who calmed rough waves / To save my life; in peace I now give praise,' 'John' chants.<sup>52</sup> Becoming a Marian figure — 'Like a rose that can't be pricked among the thorns, / I'm rescued from the sword of butchery' — 'John' cultivates a Mary garden in his own soul before he continues to preach against sin in the core of the *Vox Clamantis*.<sup>53</sup> Since the *Visio's* petition to the Virgin has enclosed 'John' inside a garden and shaped his Marian form, the 'rosa sine spina' will continue to protect her devotee in a prickly, post-Uprising England.

## Petitioning Venus / Seeking Mary

In the *Visio Anglie*, the narrator's petition to the Virgin, infused as it is with Ovidian language, blends references to the Christian God with invocations to classical deities. For instance, a prayer addressed to Mary 'who cherished man by bearing Christ' also calls upon 'gods' who can mend the oars of the Tower-like ship.<sup>54</sup> This same melding of classical and Christian representations of the divine is present in the *Confessio Amantis*, rendering the narrator's supplications to Venus a vehicle for his arrival at

<sup>50</sup> VA 20, ll. 2006–07: *Et dolor in corde parturientis erat. / Sic ego dumque queror, lacrimae mea verba sequuntur [...]*.

<sup>51</sup> VA 20, l. 2020.

<sup>52</sup> VA 20, ll. 2082–84: *Cum laudis iubilo cantica psallo deo. / Stella Maria maris, michi qui mulcebat amaros / Fluctus ne peream, laudo quietus eam*.

<sup>53</sup> VA 20, ll. 2091–92: *Vt rosa per spinas non nouit acumine pungi, / Erripior gladio sic ferientis ego*.

<sup>54</sup> VA 18, ll. 1833, 1831. These lines are adapted from Ovid, *Tristia* 1.5, 35–36.

Mary's altar.<sup>55</sup> While in the *Mirour de l'Omme* the Virgin and the virginal Virtues share qualities with Sin and the sinful Vices, in the *Confessio* the Virgin and Venus are counterparts: both have a powerful influence over human destinies through their sons, who are gods of love. In the *Confessio* Venus's realm, like Mary's in lyrics such as 'Maiden in the Mor Lay', is the blossoming outdoors, where Amans meets the goddess and is confessed by Genius.<sup>56</sup> This May-time landscape, filled with birdsong and the scent of new grass, is both a scene from medieval romance and a picture of England in spring. It is also the time of Mary's fruitfulness — two months after the March Annunciation. When in Book 1 of the *Confessio* 'John' exchanges his persona for an unrequited lover, it becomes clear that this Amans, confused by the parallels between the mother of Cupid and the mother of Christ, has mistaken Venus's garden for Mary's. This mistake increases the rejected lover's feelings of ostracism and causes him to inhabit Venus's field of suitors as if it were a wilderness in which he might howl at his loneliness. Only at the end of the *Confessio* when Amans takes up his rosary beads does he cultivate his own spiritual soil.

Deploying the Marian rhetorical principle that a petition is the key to love's garden, Amans twice appeals to Venus and her court. It is the discovery in Book 1 of a woodland glen — of the 'swote grene pleine' — and his collapse upon its 'grounde' that move the lover to cast his eyes toward a heavenly realm and offer a prayer.<sup>57</sup> In other words, it is contact with a blossoming space enclosed by trees, a 'pleine' whose low

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55 Barbara Newman writes of Christ's depiction as Cupid / Cupid's depiction as Christ in medieval art. Just as their sons represent divine corollaries in painting or poetry, so Venus and Mary are counterparts. See Barbara Newman, 'Love's Arrows: Christ as Cupid in Late Medieval Art and Devotion' in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 263–86. See also Theresa Tinkle, *Medieval Venuses and Cupids: Sexuality, Hermeneutics, and English Poetry* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

56 For a Marian reading of 'Maiden in the Mor Lay' and a survey of scholarship providing the foundations for this reading, see Donavin, *Scribit Mater*, pp. 233–34.

57 CA 1, ll. 113, 119. Rudd writes that the plain or 'felde' is an 'open space' in which grass or corn would be the main 'fruits'. She notes that in Chaucer's 'feldes', 'the open flat plain jostles with the unbounded, farmed area of land as [...] both definitions [are] in play'. See Rudd, *Greenery*, p. 13. In other words, Gower's 'pleine' can connote both the broad verdant field that usually leads to a pleasure garden and a plot cultivated for human produce. Rudd emphasizes the 'human cultivation' aspect of the plains, fields and gardens — spaces that manifest the arts of love, poetry, and gardening. She writes: 'Both fields and gardens exist to create the conditions which will provide the highest yield for plants we humans choose to put there, while simultaneously attempting to exclude any opportune and unwanted plants as weeds' (p. 165). In the cited passage from the CA, Amans is cultivating his identity as a lover.

level ground and homonymic signifier point to the plain style, that fills Amans with words meant for divine ears:<sup>58</sup>

O thou Cupide, O thou Venus,  
Thow god of love and thou goddesse,  
Wher is pité? wher is meknesse?  
Now doth me plainly live or dye,  
For certes such a maladie  
As I now have and longe have hadd,  
It myhte make a wis man madd,  
If that it scholde longe endure.  
O Venus, queene of loves cure,  
Thou lif, thou lust, thou mannes hele,  
Behold my cause and my querele,  
And yif me som part of thi grace,  
So that I may finde in this place  
If thou be gracious or non.<sup>59</sup>

In 'this place', lying abject upon its ground, Amans asks for a medicine that is secreted in Marian herbs. Where is 'pité' and 'meknesse'?<sup>60</sup> What is the medicinal balm for 'love's cure'? And who is full of 'grace'? Of course, the single answer to these questions is the Virgin, whose pity rendered her the primary intercessor for medieval Roman Catholics, whose meekness attracted God's favour, whose soothing love was compared to the Balm of Gilead, and whose graciousness was declared by the angel Gabriel. Ironically, Amans has not spoken plainly on this level green, although 'the plain style is metaphorically the clearing in the wood'<sup>61</sup>; neither has he directed his speech to the right audience.

Amans seeks in Venus what he could realize in Mary. Here, at the beginning of the *Confessio Amantis*, Amans is confused by the source

58 CA 1, l. 113. On the pun comparing a green plain with a plain style, see Maura Nolan, 'Sensation and the Plain Style in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*' in *John Gower: Others and the Self*, ed. Russell A. Peck and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), p. 127.

59 CA 1, ll. 124–37.

60 Andrew Galloway finds that references to pity in the CA point to fourteenth-century English constructs of political power. The one who evinces 'pité' holds a powerful position over the subject and in the process of enacting judgements, commutes compassion to vengeance. See Andrew Galloway, 'The Literature of 1388 and the Politics of Pity in Gower's *Confessio amantis*', in *Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England*, ed. by Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 67–104 (pp. 90–104). With Venus and Cupid, we see the inverse of this process: the gods of love begin with vengeance against the lover (shooting Amans with a fiery dart) and end in pity (as they withdraw their implements of harm and prepare him to heal physically and spiritually).

61 Nolan, 'Sensation and the Plain Style', p. 127.

of true mediation in love and by the multivalence of Venus's persona. He regards her in Marian terms as 'the source and welle of wel or wo' and yet endures her cruel accusation of 'faitour' (traitor to her court).<sup>62</sup> As Theresa Tinkle has illustrated, the *Confessio Amantis's* characterization of Venus is rich and complex, deriving from multiple mythographic traditions.<sup>63</sup> Juxtaposed with each other in Gower's poem, these discordant representations — such as the more honorific *Venus caelestis* versus the opportunistic seducer — endow the goddess with fascinating ambiguities that nevertheless render her a less secure object of veneration than Mary. According to Tinkle,

Gower exploits the multiplicity of traditions — literary amatory conventions, historicizing and astrologizing hermeneutics, natural law — so as to remake their meanings [...]. Within the poem, all the diverse traditions form an integrated whole, within which each convention, each discourse, each perspective enters into endlessly fascinating interplay with the others. The poem does not offer a single meaning but, rather, engaging invitations to reflect on the perspectives that create meaning [...].<sup>64</sup>

Amans attempts to make sense of his amatory experiences in a context of potentially endless Venerean play with meaning and identity. The result is that he cries out like a 'madd' man in a barren wilderness, rather than as a penitent secure in Mary's embrace.<sup>65</sup> He has lost the grace in both his Johannine identity and in the Virgin intercessor.

Although Venus's character is especially ambiguous in the *Confessio's* opening, where she calls for a priest to aid the lover, and in the end, when she bestows upon Amans a set of black rosary beads, the poem presses toward darker views of her influence and the need for Amans to separate from her. Commentary in the *Vox Clamantis* helps to explain Gower's views on the competition between Mary and Venus for English hearts, a struggle that has shaken the faithful's fidelity and caused the lover's misprision. According to the poet's concept of matrilineage, Mary endows

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62 CA 1, ll. 148–49, 174.

63 Tinkle, *Medieval Venuses and Cupids*. Chapter 7 focuses on the CA.

64 Tinkle, *Medieval Venuses and Cupids*, p. 193. Also offering a complex interpretation of Venus, Elliot R. Kendall views the rulers of love's court in the *Confessio Amantis* as representative of different kinds of lordship, Venus enacting a 'reciprocalist' rule with her interest in the healing of her servant and Cupid a magnificent rule that makes absolutist demands of his servant without interest in a bond or concern for well-being. Venus's rule tempers Cupid's by supplying a reward, releasing the lover from fruitless service, fulfilling the potential of the confession, and enabling the lover to focus on politics. See Elliot R. Kendall, *Lordship and Literature: John Gower and the Politics of the Great Household* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 114–27.

65 CA 1, l. 130.

her divine son with a heritage: 'The lineage of his birth mother declares Christ by right the heir of the land in which He was born'.<sup>66</sup> By analogy, Mary gifts every Christian country, including England, her 'dowry', to Jesus. However, Venus constantly attempts to steal Christ's inheritance. As the *Vox* comes to its conclusion, 'John' laments that England, formerly the Virgin's 'rose' is now Venus's 'thorn'.<sup>67</sup> In fact, he claims, the sinful people to whom he cries out in the wilderness, have made the entire country a 'Venus'.<sup>68</sup> Representing an England awash with wickedness, he proclaims: 'The anchor already fails to hold our ship'.<sup>69</sup> With Venus as the country's captain, England needs the guidance of *Stella Maris*, a guidance that 'John' prays for in the *Visio Anglie*. This struggle between Mary and Venus for control of the land takes on special meaning nearly two decades after the composition of the *Vox* when Henry IV would be anointed with a holy oil in an eagle-shaped vial, believed to be delivered by the Virgin Mary. Henry, who like Christ benefited from his matrilineal line — from his mother Blanche, who made him 'Lancaster' — would receive his inheritance with Mary's blessing. Although this event would take place a few years after the *Confessio*'s completion, the *Vox*'s commentary shows that Gower would have been thinking about the power of holy matrilineages during the time of the House of Lancaster's struggles with the crown — the time of the *Confessio*'s composition. If all England had mistaken Venus's thorns for Mary's roses until Henry IV was crowned, how might anyone expect love-blinded Amans to make the distinction?

Throughout the *Confessio Amantis* it becomes clear that Venus is Mary's counterpart whom Amans chooses to serve on his way to prayerful veneration of Christ's mother. Lacking the Evangelist's in/sight, Amans sees in Venus the salvific attributes belonging to the Virgin and will require the goddess's complete rejection before he envisions a higher power. For the lover sending his petitions to the court of love, Venus is not only the 'Source and Welle' of the joys and sorrows, an epithet belonging to the Virgin, but also the mother of the god of love.<sup>70</sup> Amans does not perceive that rather than completing a sacrifice for humanity's redemption, Venus and Cupid inflict violence to ensnare worshippers.<sup>71</sup> The lover is

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66 VC 3, ll. 651–52: *Linea natalis matris de iure fatetur / Heredum Cristum, qua fuit ortus, humi [...]*.

67 VC 7, l. 1358.

68 VC 7, l. 1358.

69 VC 7, l. 1350: *Anchora iam nostrum non tenet vlla ratem*.

70 CA 1, l. 148.

71 For an extended reading of Gower's violent Venus, see Georgiana Donavin, "'When reson torneth into rage": Violence in Book III of the *Confessio Amantis*,' in *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), pp. 216–34.

overmastered by their aggression until the gods of love determine him to be unworthy of their fight.

Driving the lover under Venus's influence, Cupid launches a flaming dart at Amans, the direct response to the lover's petition being increased pain and incapacity, rather than the salvation offered by Mary through Jesus. The character who was once 'John' in the *Confessio's* Prologue — an author who shot arrows bearing the Word into the heart of the world — is now targeted like an animal in the park for composing a lover's petition. The caption for the famous image of Gower as archer, for instance in the Cotton Tiberius manuscript of the *Vox Clamantis*, promises that the poet will shoot his darts at the wicked only.<sup>72</sup> Debilitated and dehumanized, Amans is wicked in his spiritual myopia; he now requires Mary's 'cure' more than ever, but in his befuddlement, has eyes only for Venus. That Venus is, however, an insufficient object of veneration is made plain by Genius, Venus's own priest, when in Book 5 he comments on the 'schame' he feels toward the Graeco-Roman gods.<sup>73</sup> Regarding Venus herself, Genius points out the vitiating promiscuity and incestuousness that led the goddess to conceive so many children with different fathers and to engage in liaisons with both her brother Jupiter and child Cupid. Whereas the Virgin conceived a divine son for her Father and Creator through the Holy Spirit, a mystical union that might be seen as holy incest, Venus indulges in actual consanguineous sex that produces a perverted pantheon. Still Amans does not comprehend.<sup>74</sup> While 'John' of the Prologue would have condemned such lust and incest, Amans, besotted with a distant lady, desperately beseeches Venus's help. The lover's worship of the god and goddess of love shows how far he has devolved from the Johannine ethos: the devotee of the chaste Baptist is a lusty bachelor sanctioning licentiousness; the student of the eagle-eyed Evangelist worships blind Cupid. While the Baptist and the Evangelist are devoted to the Virgin, Amans now sees Mary's shadow in Venus. He lives in 'holy dread' that the

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72 London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A. IV., fol. 9. For more on Gower's views of Cupid as bowman, see 'Ecce patet tensus' in which the poet blames the god's blindness for stray arrows and laments that no human has a defence adequate for Cupid's attack. See R. F. Yeager, ed. and trans., 'Ecce patet tensus', in *John Gower: the Minor Latin Works and 'In Praise of Peace'* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/yeager-gower-minor-latin-works-ecce-patet-tensus>>.

73 CA 5, l. 1382.

74 For an interpretation of the CA's incest motif and the ways in which Venus / Cupid and Mary / Jesus figure in the frame of the narrative to provide alternative perspectives on this theme, see Georgiana Donavin, *Incest Narratives and the Structure of Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Victoria, B.C.: ELS, 1993), pp. 20–32.



goddess will deny him his lady, rather than that he should be unworthy in the eyes of Mary's son.<sup>75</sup>

Besides Genius's increasingly explicit denunciations of Venus, Amans hears the priest's moral teachings through the Marian rhetoric of Peronelle and Thaise. In Book 1, Genius tells Peronelle's story in 'The Tale of the Three Questions' so that Amans might learn 'humblesce [...] / And ek the vice of Pride eschuie, / Wherof the gloire is fals and vein; / Which God Himself hath in desdeign [...]:'<sup>76</sup> In sum, Amans has an opportunity to learn Marian values through Peronelle's conduct and speech. We have already seen how Peronelle herself is a Marian exemplar and how her answers to Alphonse's arrogant questions provide a homily on pride and its antidote, humility. Nevertheless, the lover does not process and imitate Peronelle's virtuous rhetoric until he regains his identity as 'John', one of the Virgin's adherents. Until then he mistakes the goddess for Our Lady and his lady, whose speech seems 'a blisse of hevene', for the *virgo bona dicendi perita*.<sup>77</sup> According to the lover, the lady's discourse is indeed 'full of trouthe and full of faith', yet he takes it for a 'deynté feste', rather than for the eucharistic food provided by the Word.<sup>78</sup> Believing his beloved's conversations and carols a 'paradis' despite having heard Peronelle's homily on humility, the lover laments until the end of his confession that he 'mai [his desires] noight areche', even though Peronelle has taught him that a woman (Mary) can attain what a man cannot.<sup>79</sup> When Amans's comprehension of Marian virtue does not advance, Genius provides him with powerful teachings in the Marian rhetoric of Thaise, the heroine of 'The Tale of Apollonius of Tyre', a speaker most fitting to countermand the venereal vices and positioned to deliver a culminating lesson in the *Confessio*'s final book. Although raised under the threat of murder and incest, although sold to a brothel in Mytilene, Thaise exemplifies Marian virginity and continually preaches chastity. Comically, when 'The Tale of Apollonius of Tyre' is complete, Amans declares that this story has nothing to do with him.<sup>80</sup> He has absorbed only the salacious details from the incest narrative and not the spiritual directive for self-control.

75 Claire Banchich, 'Holy Fear and Poetics in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Book 1', in *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), p. 196.

76 CA 1, ll. 3061–64.

77 CA 6, l. 874. On the lady's speech, see Patrick J. Gallacher, *Love, the Word, and Mercury: A Reading of John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), pp. 81–82.

78 CA 6, ll. 852, 848.

79 CA 6, l. 872; CA 8, l. 2296.

80 CA 8, ll. 2029–39.

In his dogged pursuit of Venus's approval, he sends a final Supplication to her, a poem composed in rhyme royal and with high diction and syntax, forms often used in praise of Mary.<sup>81</sup> In Matthew W. Irvin's assessment,

This poem, a beautiful piece of artifice, relies upon the very tropes that would usually make such a poem emotionally effective. However, the juxtaposition of Amans's letter and the massive text that precedes it overwhelms its affective power, and renders it (appropriately) foolish.<sup>82</sup>

Like the entreaty with which the lover invokes Venus in Book 1, the Supplication is almost entirely complaint and petition. In her response to Amans, Venus remarks to the lover that he has sent a 'bille' in which 'thou hast compleigned thee' (but not spoken 'pleinliche') and asked what might not be granted.<sup>83</sup> Despite the rhetorical theory provided by Genius in Book 7 and the model letters of Ovidian women such as Canace, Amans understands only how to spread his woes, not how to reach his audience. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* may advise that '[t]he appeal to pity must be brief, for nothing dries more quickly than a tear', but Amans has learned only to make that appeal, not how to make it effective.<sup>84</sup> In the *Vox Clamantis* 'John' cries in the interest of England; in the *Confessio Amantis* Amans weeps for only himself. In the Supplication Amans complains that he is out of sync with Nature, his own wits, and the will of the gods. Nature urges him to love, he laments, but does not provide the means; his reason advises him to turn from the lover's pursuit, but his will does not obey; Venus ordained his desire but did so in an unlucky council with Saturn. These contradictions prove Amans's inability to communicate sensibly, and they betray the futility of his courtly endeavours. If Amans's petitions lack logic and audience appeal, Venus's response, even with her harsh rejection of the lover, reveals at least a small measure of the pity that the *Confessio's* Book 7 has declared characteristic of a great leader.<sup>85</sup> Venus is certainly cruel in her denunciation, roundly rejecting the lover and shaming him with the accusation that Amans lacks what 'behoveth

81 CA 8, ll. 2217–2300. A well-known formal appeal to the Virgin in rhyme royal would be Chaucer's Prioress's invocation to Mary in the Prologue to her tale. See *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). On Gower's use of rhyme royal, see Masayoshi Itô, 'Gower and Rime Royal', in the *Bulletin of College of General Education, Tohoku University*, 12 (1971), 47–65.

82 Matthew W. Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower: Politics and Personae in the Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), p. 283.

83 CA 8, ll. 2324, 2326.

84 Ad Her, II. xxxi. 50.

85 Matthew W. Irvin emphasizes that in CA 7, pity and chastity are the two overarching qualities of a king. See Matthew W. Irvin, "'Noght without peine': Chastity, Complaint, and Lucrece's *Vox Clamantis*", in *John Gower: Others and the Self*, ed. by Russell A. Peck and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 50–72 (p. 50).

to the plowh' — but she says nothing more than he has already revealed about his various incapacities in the Supplication.<sup>86</sup> What Venus knows and Amans betrays is that the 'swote green pleine' ripe for sowing must be abandoned for the virginal *rosarium* that the goddess supplies.

Although, according to Gower's theory of 'Rethorique', persuasive language, issuing from the Word, deploys emotion to turn the will toward reason, in the *Confessio Amantis*, sermonic speech, issuing from Genius, has only elicited in Amans more emotions associated with the seven deadly sins. In the Supplication, Amans proves himself to be envious of wrens with their mates, despairing like a wrestler without strength, and angry at a world that will not gratify his desires. Despite Genius's intentions to move Amans's will to honourable love, the confessant is still 'bewhapid', his reason unable to defend itself from attacks of longing, and thus the Supplication expresses contradictory yearnings.<sup>87</sup> I have argued elsewhere that Amans is unable to construct an effective appeal or benefit from Genius's preaching because the lover is essentially a figure of the human will, unmoored from the intellect that Genius represents.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, the lover does gesture toward reason in the Supplication's bipartite petition, not only entreating satisfaction with the lady, but also leaving open the possibility of understandable rejection: he asks that Venus either accept him into love's court or release him from desire's pains. The lover's view of rejection, however, does not yet encompass the consequent spiritual healing, but imagines death as the only release.

Amans's existence in a personal and rhetorical limbo is figured in the meadow where he stands fixed, awaiting Venus's response to his Supplication and then the final verdict from love's court. A tree offers shade and protection from imminent disappointment as Amans falls to his knees upon the goddess's sudden arrival, and while he takes the suppliant position on love's very grounds, Venus initiates some verbal play concerning the location of 'grace':<sup>89</sup>

[I] preide hire for to do me grace:  
Sche caste hire chiere upon mi face,  
And as it were halvinge a game  
Sche axeth me what is mi name.  
'Ma dame', I seide, 'John Gower'.<sup>90</sup>

86 CA 8, l. 2526.

87 CA 8, l. 2219.

88 Georgiana Donavin, 'Rhetorical Gower: Aristotelianism in the *Confessio Amantis*'s Treatment of "Rethorique"', in *John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts*, ed. by Malte Urban (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 155–73.

89 CA 8, ll. 2315–16.

90 CA 8, ll. 2317–11.

Asking for 'grace', the lover has sought what is already inherent in the *praenomen* 'John', and the rhyme underscores the name-game. The gift of love that he for so long begged from Venus has been available to him always by claiming the salvation of Christ and mediation of Mary and by assuming his own place as 'John' in the redeemed world. Reclaiming the appellation 'John Gower', the narrator's position beneath the tree acquires new resonances: of John the Baptist threatening that the axe will be laid to the root of any sinner's tree or of John the Evangelist studying scripture beneath a tree on Patmos.<sup>91</sup> The ironic juxtaposition of these devotional images with the revived 'John Gower' as a subject kneeling on Venus's mead recalls that there is another, more fruitful garden in the Virgin. The lover will continue to struggle until he enters that *hortus conclusus*.

The more the lover notices himself and his surroundings, the more he progresses toward that goal. He registers once more that he is on a 'plein' and understands now that it encircles all the lovers described by Genius in his confessional tales.<sup>92</sup> These grounds are where lovers of all eras — Aristotle and the Queen of Greece, Canace and Machaire, Tristan and Isolde — enact their courtships, their happy lives or their tragic separations. 'In this place' is where they gather for the 'Parlement' that will adjudicate 'John's' cause — but the reader already knows, even if the lover does not yet accept it, that eternal grace does not arise from this 'gras'.<sup>93</sup> Awaiting their determination, the lover names the famous couples that he sees 'upon the field', and amazed, he 'lay in hope of grace'.<sup>94</sup>

While Amans takes stock of his environment and the lovers populating it, puns involving 'grace' and 'gras', homonyms that have resonated throughout the final section of the *Confessio*, surface with powerful ironies. Venus nudges the lover to notice the contrast between the verdant spring and the seasons of his own life: she comments that the 'grene gras' of his youth is overrun with 'hey'.<sup>95</sup> Once she denounces his age as withered grass, hardly the 'grace' he had sought, 'John' faints on the ground as he had in Book 1 before undergoing the confession. Later, Cupid arrives to find the lover '[s]wounende upon the grene gras' and 'liggende / Upon the ground tofore his yhen'.<sup>96</sup> 'John', who had been given the grace to follow the spiritually sighted Evangelist so closely, now prostrates himself on the

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91 Matthew 3.10 and Luke 3.9 convey the Baptist's threat. Images of the Baptist among the trees with the Lamb of God or of the Evangelist contemplating beneath the shade of a tree on Patmos can be seen in a variety of medieval devotional images, for instance British Library, MS Harley 2846, fol. 28<sup>v</sup>. for the former and New York, Morgan Library, MS M 1000, fol. 13<sup>r</sup>. for the latter.

92 CA 8, l. 2464.

93 CA 8, l. 2454.

94 CA 8, ll. 2666, 2725.

95 CA 8, ll. 2436–37.

96 CA 8, ll. 2749, 2788.

grass until 'This blinde god which mai noght se, / Hath groped til that he me fond'.<sup>97</sup> As Jennifer Bryan suggests, verbal play with words such as 'grace' and 'gras' can be situated within 'traditions of Christian wordplay' in which 'a pun can serve as a device for synthesis and simultaneity, a device not for destabilizing but for deepening the truth'.<sup>98</sup> In Book 8 of the *Confessio Amantis* the *adnominatio* involving Mary's or Venus's gift (grace) and the sanctified space in which it might be experienced (grass) interplant the roles of the two divine women and highlight the debasement of a lover who seeks elevation through grace, but instead lies abject on the lowly grass. Gower deploys the pun as advised by the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* — to revive the audience's interest — and here both the reader at the end of a long poetic narrative and the lover at the end of his extended confession, snap to attention once the true theological and geographical position is understood.<sup>99</sup>

Releasing his hold on the lover and allowing 'John' to embrace the spiritual gifts for which he is named, Cupid withdraws the fiery dart. It is here that Venus comes closest to Marian mercy since she does not wish the lover to die: the goddess applying her own medicine — a cold ointment closing the wound, soothing the restless mind, and chilling desire. Holding up a 'wonder mirour', the goddess shocks the lover with a reflection of his ravaged face and finally accomplishes what Genius's sermons have been unable to do: to raise emotions that can turn the will to right belief and conduct.<sup>100</sup> Although Venus's mirror might seem pitiless, it is necessary for 'John' to comprehend the truth. Stunned but attentive to his image

97 CA 8, ll. 2793–94.

98 Jennifer Bryan, 'A berd! A berd!': Chaucer's Miller and the Poetics of the Pun, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 38 (2016), 1–38 (p. 5). The following selection of scholarly literature addresses the rhetoric of punning by late medieval English authors: Helge Kökeritz, 'Rhetorical Word-Play in Chaucer', *Publication of the Modern Language Association*, 69 (1954), 937–52; Paull F. Baum, 'Chaucer's Puns', *Publication of the Modern Language Association*, 71 (1956), 225–46; Gerhard Joseph, 'Chaucer's Coinage: Foreign Exchange and the Puns of *The Shipman's Tale*', *Chaucer Review*, 17.4 (1983), 341–57; Walter Redfern, *Puns* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 48–58; Laura Kendrick, *The Game of Love: Troubadour Wordplay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); R. A. Shoaf, 'The Play of Puns in Late Middle English Poetry: Concerning Juxtology', in *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters*, ed. by Jonathan Culler (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 44–61; Sheila Delaney, 'Anatomy of the Resisting Reader: Some Impressions of Resistance to Sexual Wordplay in Medieval Literature', *Exemplaria*, 4.1 (1992), 7–34; Peggy Knapp, 'Queynte / Quaint', in *Time Bound Words: Semantic and Social Economies from Chaucer's England to Shakespeare's* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 130–42; Christian Sheridan, 'Funny Money: Puns and Currency in *The Shipman's Tale*', in *Medieval English Comedy*, ed. by Sandra Hordis and Paul Hardwick (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 111–23; Sophie Read, 'Puns: Serious Wordplay', in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. by Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 80–94.

99 Ad Her. 1.6.

100 CA 8, l. 2821.

there, the old lover accepts that which Gower had attempted to teach the young Richard II in the *speculum principum* of *Vox Clamantis* 6: that self-recognition must precede imitation of good instruction. At last, the lover is capable of processing what Genius has taught him. 'John' finds a complete cure for lust's ailments by discovering that his own personal garden, in contrast to the verdant scene of love's court, has withered. He closely inspects the years 'Of gras, of lef, of flour, of fruit' that now endure a winter that 'wol no somer knowe [since] / The grene lef is overthrowe'.<sup>101</sup> Accepting that his own blighted plot contrasts so sharply with the May-time meadow and that Venus abandons him for her abode in the 'sterred sky' — a parody Assumption — 'John' is ready to seek Mary's grace in a prayer garden, in other words, to take up his rosary beads.<sup>102</sup>

Before taking her leave, Venus bestows upon him a circlet of black beads through which he might seek spiritual love. Through this act Venus acknowledges not only that the aging suitor does not belong in her court but also that a goddess of sexual fulfilment cannot ease this heart's yearning. As 'John' remembers it:

A peire of bedes blak as sable  
 Sche tok and heng my necke aboute;  
 Upon the gaudes al withoute  
 Was write of gold, *Por reposer*.  
 'Lo', thus sche seide, 'John Gower,  
 Now thou art ate laste cast,  
 This have I for thin ese cast,  
 That thou no more of love sieche.  
 Bot my will is that thou besieche  
 And preie hierafter for the pes,  
 And that thou make a plein reles  
 To love [...].'<sup>103</sup>

Through the gift of beads, Venus leads the narrator to the Virgin — to the rosary (along with paternosters, the most common 'bidding' of the fourteenth century) and a life of meditation after the *Confessio Amantis* is completed. The inscription 'Por reposer' points to the calm and spiritual peace for which Venus says 'John' should pray, after so long being in a fluctuating and exhausting emotional state. 'Por reposer' rhymes with 'John Gower': through the rosary 'John' will tie himself to contemplative practice. Offstage, after his prayer for England and various farewell gestures, his Marian rhetoric will be 'Ave Maria'. The 'plein reles' from the

101 CA 8, ll. 2848, 2853–54.

102 CA 8, l. 2941.

103 CA 8, ll. 2904–15.

strivings of love has come about from the plain style of Genius's teachings that finally enter the lover's consciousness when he is languishing in the garden of love and find room in his newly awakened mind. With a petition to Venus, the lover enters the *hortus conclusus* from a side gate.

## Embodying Marian Reason in the *Cinkante Balades*

Moving to the *Cinkante Balades*, we turn from two poems — the *Visio Anglie* and *Confessio Amantis* — whose subtle Marian endings are grounded in a short prayers or petitions, to Gower's long works with more explicit and developed treatments of the Virgin in their conclusions. The *Cinkante Balades* concludes with a ballade praising the Virgin's steadfast love and a coda addressed to 'gentile Engleterre', whose people are encouraged in the hope made possible by both the Mother of God and the new king — Mary mediating on behalf of all for salvation and Henry IV bringing 'peas, honour, joie et prosperité'. While this book's previous chapter shows that many of the *Cinkante Balades* are 'lettres' meant to be sent to the beloved, poem LI on the superiority and perdurability of the Virgin's love attempts not to address the beloved (Mary) but instead to convert all lovers and a broad-based English audience to Marian devotion. Like the *Confessio*'s volatile Amans, the various narrators of the *Cinkante Balades* have felt the fluctuating emotions and uncertain success of secular courtships. Indeed, a French-speaking suitor of an English lady is, like Amans, rejected with her resounding 'nay' and in need of Mary's comfort. Consequently, a more philosophical balladeer who has internalized Marian reason — a mental discipline both making possible and made possible by chastity and fidelity — in the end expresses the power of this comfort. A lover dedicated to the Virgin will not find him or herself in an orchard lacking birdsong, as several lovers in the ballade cycle do, but instead in the *hortus conclusus* enjoying 'amour sanz variance'.<sup>104</sup>

Gower focuses on chastity and reason in both of his ballade cycles: the *Traitié Selonc Les Auctours Pour Essampler Les Amantz Marietz* and the *Cinkante Balades*. Through references to the Virgin in initial and culminating positions in his ballade cycles, Gower creates a circular structure enclosing a poetic Mary garden. Although his treatment of the Virgin in the *Traitié* is not as extensive as in the *Cinkante Balades*, Gower depends upon discussions of Marian chastity in the beginning and ending of the former to create a circular structure or *hortus conclusus*. Consisting of eighteen ballades on the sanctity of marriage, the *Traitié* appears with the *Cinkante Balades* in the Trentham Manuscript and with other texts in twelve other

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104 CB LI, l. 14.

codices. In the shorter ballade cycle of the *Traitié* Gower takes care to teach that although matrimony is a blessed state, the Virgin offers one better.<sup>105</sup> The *Traitié* begins, like other important introductions in Gower's poems, with a ballade presenting God as the awe-inspiring creator, endowing humankind with reason and the resulting faculties of self-governance. The refrain for the first ballade is therefore 'Dont sur le corps raison ert conestable' (Thus, reason is constable of the body). The next ballade explains how reason should take charge over sexuality: the 'constable' must enforce continence in love. With this introduction, the narrator is poised to compare the personal governance of virginity to that of conjugal love. God wishes humanity to rise to perfection, but does not enforce it, ballade III explains; God desires virginity, but also accepts faithful marriage as a sanctified state.<sup>106</sup> A Latin gloss to ballade III in the base manuscript for Macaulay's edition of the *Traitié* — Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 3, fols 186<sup>v</sup>–190 — underscores this message: 'Qualiter virginalis castitas in gradu suo matrimonio prefertur: ambo tamen sub sacre conversacionis disciplina deo creatori placabilia consistunt' (How virginity is preferred to marriage: nevertheless, both contain aspects that are appealing to God the creator, according to commonly known sacred teaching). In addition, ballade XVIII reminds the reader that marriage is 'le seconde' rather than 'le premier' estate in life.<sup>107</sup>

With this clarification established in the *Traitié's* first few poems, the narrator situates the Virgin within an incarnational theology of marriage and chastity. Although virginity is preferred, the Virgin's associations with both strict chastity and divine matrimony complicate the division between the first and second estate. In ballade V, the narrator remarks: 'Soubtz cell habit prist incarnation / De la virgine cil q'est nostre Sire' (Under the clothing [of a marriage vow] our Lord took flesh from the Virgin).<sup>108</sup> Two marriage vows obtain here: the pledge between Mary and Joseph that made possible a shelter for the infant Christ and the promise of the Annunciation concerning God's 'marriage' with humanity. In the *Mirour de l'Omme*, too, Gower explains that the bond between Mary and Joseph cloaked the birth of Jesus. While Mary clothed the holy child in flesh, her

105 For a contemporary approach to the *Traitié*, as well as a list of manuscripts, see R. F. Yeager, Introduction to the *Traitié Selonc Les Auctours Pour Essampler Les Amantz Marietz*, in *The French Balades*, ed. and trans. by R. F. Yeager (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011), <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/yeager-gower-french-balades-traitie-selonc-les-auctours-pour-essampler-les-amantz-marietz-introduction>>.

106 *Traitié* III, ll. 1–4: *Au plus parfit dieus ne nous obligea, / Mais il voet bien qe nous soions parfitz. / Cist homme a dieu sa chasteté dona, / Et cist en dieu voet estre bons maritz* (To the highest perfection God does not oblige us, / But he wishes that we were perfect. / One man gives his chastity to God, / And another wishes for a good marriage from God).

107 *Traitié* XVIII, l. 8.

108 *Traitié* V, ll. 10–11.



cohabitation with Joseph hid the incarnation so that the devil would not know of it.<sup>109</sup> Regarding the Virgin's divine nuptials, exegesis on the Song of Songs in which Christ is the bridegroom and Mary the bride, medieval lyrics such as 'I Syng of a Myden' in which Jesus arrives in Mary's 'bower', and liberal arts treatises such as John of Garland's *Epithalamium Beate Virginis Marie* comparing Jesus and Mary's marriage to that of Mercury and Philology all provide contexts for Gower's comment that the incarnation was dressed as a marriage. The incarnation took place beneath the 'habit' of the chaste Virgin, who contributed a fleshly garment to the godhead, her commitment of body and soul to God providing a pattern for monastic 'marriage' in which postulants, like the 'parfit' person in the *Traitié*'s ballade III, vow their lives to God.

Although the *Traitié* is a ballade cycle almost devoid of nature imagery, it constitutes a textual *hortus conclusus* by beginning with a discourse on virginity and ending with a statement on how the second estate can come as close as possible to virginal control — by avoiding adultery. *Traitié*'s ballade XVIII commends the faithfully married and threatens that the spouse who yields to adultery may earn God's eternal displeasure:

Des trois estatz benoitz c'est le seconde,	Of the three estates, blessed is the second
Q'au mariage en droit amour se ploie;	That bends toward marriage in true love;
Et qui cell ordre en foldelit confonde	And he whom temptation does beckon
Trop poet doubter, s'il ne se reconvoie. <sup>110</sup>	May not recover such bliss from above.

Not only does the *Traitié* begin with discussions of virginity on the model of Mary, whose sexual discipline shaped the flesh that would bear the Word, and end with verses on fidelity in marriage, but it also encloses the lines concerning sexual control inside the individual *hortus conclusus* of each relevant ballade. Verses on the Virgin, virginity, and chastity occur between lines eight and twelve in the poems quoted above, enveloped in an argument against sexual licence made by the rest, in other words,

109 MO, ll. 27757–68: *Dieus, de sa halte providence / Qui voit le fin ainz q'il commence, / Pensa de sa virgine prendre / La nostre char, mais ce q'il pense / Volt celer de sa sapience / Qe le diable ne le pot entendre: / Et pour le cela la vierge tendre / Volt dieus a mariage rendre, / Et l'autre part pour l'evidence / Q'il volt en soy la loy comprendre; / Car sanz la loy qant homme engendre, / Ne pas honneste la semence.* For a queer reading of the clothing provided in Mary's womb to Christ, see María Bullón-Fernández, 'Gower's Queer Poetics in the *Mirour de l'Homme*', *Accessus*, 6.1 (2020), <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1041&context=accessus>>, 38–39.

110 *Traitié* XVIII, ll. 8–11.

protected by a moral crust. The *Traitié* encloses the textual garden of the whole cycle and of single poems positioned in its beginning and ending.

While the *Traitié* opens with allusions to virginity and the Virgin, the *Cinkante Balades* culminates in a poem depicting Mary as the queen of reasonable love, a love governed according to the principles laid out in the *Traitié*'s ballades I–III. Just as the *Traitié* progresses toward a statement in ballade V on how the Virgin's chaste marriage enabled the incarnation, the final four poems of the *Cinkante Balades* build toward veneration of Mary. All four of the *Cinkante Balades*' final poems are spoken by a narrator gradually detaching himself from the wheel of fortune in love; this narrator's philosophical and religious sensibilities increase until he expresses the culminating ballade in praise of Mary. He develops a process for overcoming the mental and spiritual ravages of love's fortunes and for attaining holy affection in the Virgin: first by rejecting the seductions of secular love, next by examining the Christian foundations of love, and finally by encountering those foundations in Mary.

Beginning with *Cinkante Balades* XLVIII, the narrator denounces secular courtships according to the prototypic oxymorons of love: *Amour* is, for instance, a 'foi trichereuse' (treacherous faith).<sup>111</sup> The refrain declares the impossibility of uttering the truth about profane desire: if '[e]n toutz erreurs amour se justefie' (in all errors / by means of all errors, Amor justifies himself), then, committing many errors, Love erroneously argues on his own behalf. The circular reasoning of secular desire imitates Fortuna's rather than Mary's wheel of discourse. It continually returns to fallacious propositions rather than to divine principles for language. Such faulty logic entraps the lover in unpredictable cycles of pain as he or she justifies human failings in order to continue a warped attachment. This insight on love's recurring falsehoods propels the narrator to look for faith and truth in religion. Moving toward overt religious instruction and the most famous Christian dictate on love, XLIX implores each reasonable person to abide by the Greatest Commandment, as Jesus taught: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind". This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself".<sup>112</sup> As Gower paraphrases:

Bon amour doit son dieu amer ainçois,	Good love must love God before all.
Qui son dieu aime il aime verrement,	Whoever loves God loves truly, if among
Si ad de trois amours le primer choïs;	Three loves her first choice on God falls;

<sup>111</sup> CB XLVIII, l. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Matthew 22. 37–39.

Et apres dieu il doit secondement

And after God, the true lover chooses  
second

Amer son proesme a soi  
semblablement;<sup>113</sup>

Love of neighbour as love of self to  
reckon.

With unmistakable *repetitio* of 'God' and 'love', these lines hammer the message home that proper affection derives from a grounding in religious devotion. Equating this devotion with motherhood, the refrain gestures toward the Mother's honourable love by proclaiming love of honour a 'droite miere' (true mother). For those in the second estate of life, XLIX also offers a third kind of love beyond awe of the divine and care for one's neighbour: the 'matrimoine de les seintes lois' (matrimony according to holy laws) that could signify either chaste marriage as defined in the *Traitié* or the Virgin's spiritual marriage.<sup>114</sup>

If in XLIX honourable love derives from the Greatest Commandment and love of honour is a mother, the penultimate ballade investigates what it means to make this higher Love 'chief' in one's life.<sup>115</sup> If, as a mother, devotion to righteousness gives birth to good children — dedication to virtuousness and faithfulness in following the Greatest Commandment — then Love himself is the divine commander and protector of this devotion. In ballade L, Love removes the urge to sin and reverses the character flaws caused by wicked thought and behaviour. The timid become valiant, the harsh gentle, the miserly generous, the belligerent peaceful. Love then establishes his 'jurediccion' over the 'resonal' person, who can now rely on the conscience to direct intimate relationships.<sup>116</sup> This direction is akin to steady navigation of a ship, the ballade claims, such navigation as we have seen the Virgin provide in the *Visio Anglie*. The unsteady lover is 'en tempeste' until the discovery, the final ballade will show, of the Virgin's rudder.<sup>117</sup> Love's chiefdom, ballade L's refrain repeats, creates an accord with Nature and Reason. As demonstrated by the final poem of the *Cinkante Balades*, such an accord is best expressed though consecration to the Virgin.

*Cinkante Balades* LI is the final ballade in the collection; its focus on the Virgin Mary secures the lover's position away from the courtly lawn, where suitors offer false promises and empty posturing, and inside the spiritual protection of the *hortus conclusus*. Ballade LI begins with an assertion concerning the reasonable love that leads to such security:

<sup>113</sup> CB XLIX, ll. 8–12.

<sup>114</sup> CB XLIX, l. 17.

<sup>115</sup> CB L, l. 1.

<sup>116</sup> CB L, ll. 13–14.

<sup>117</sup> CB L, l. 20.

Amour de soi est bon en toute guise,	Inherently good is love in each guise,
Si resoun le governe et justifie;	If Reason rule over carnality;
Mais autrement, s'il naist de fole	If a foolish desire reigns otherwise,
emprise,	
N'est pas amour, ainz serra dit sotie. <sup>118</sup>	It is not love, but fond absurdity.

'Fond absurdity' is an apt characterization of some of the lovers' attitudes in the *Cinkante Balades*, as this book's previous chapter shows. Laments concerning the cruelty of Nature and recriminations involving classical exemplars fill the ballade exchanges between a French-speaking suitor and his English lady. These complaints of unrequited love and expressions of volatile emotions correspond to Amans's benighted protests against his fortune in Venus's court, protests calmed only by rosary beads. Love may always be good at its root, but if plucked impetuously or pursued foolishly, it can lead away from rather than toward self-realization and satisfaction.

It is the exercise of reason, along with the choice of an honourable partner that yields these blessings. As Maura Nolan points out in her work on Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*, representations of human agency, including that of lovers, are tied to Mary, whose considerable agency at the Annunciation — the free will to accept or not the conception of Christ — becomes a template for all others.<sup>119</sup> In ballade LI, the heart ruled by the mind and directed by Reason will choose to find true love in the Virgin Mother:

Avise soi chascuns de sa partie,	Let all set their heart and mind in amity,
Car ma resoun de novell acquaintance	Since Reason presents a new friend,
M'ad fait amer d'amour la plus cherie	And makes me fond of this cherished Lady:
Virgine et miere, en qui gist ma creance. <sup>120</sup>	The Virgin Mother, on whom I depend.

In the lines above, Reason courteously introduces and encourages a 'novell acquaintance' — the Virgin, whom everyone might meet and adore. Achieving Mary's love requires a sacrifice, however: abandoning flirtations

<sup>118</sup> CB LI, ll. 1–4.

<sup>119</sup> Maura Nolan, 'Agency and the Poetics of Sensation in Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*' in *Answerable Style: The Idea of the Literary in Medieval England*, ed. by Frank Grady and Andrew Galloway (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), p. 223.

<sup>120</sup> CB LI, ll. 5–8.

at court that lead to popularity and perhaps sexual gratification. It is reasonable to revere the Virgin, instead, because she is beyond compare:

As toutes dames jeo doi moun servise	Attendance on dames at court sacrifice
Abandoner par droite courtasie	I must, abandon with right courtesy.
Mais a ma dame pleine de franchise	Revering my Lady, I'll not compromise:
Pour comparer n'est une en ceste vie. <sup>121</sup>	So noble, incomparable is she.

In addition to bringing a lover into proximity with a most noble lady, admiring the Virgin releases the lover from jealousy and anxiety, since Mary offers her 'perdurable amour' to all who pray to her. In fact, in the lines below, the narrator invites others to join him in admiring a woman so full of honour, joy, and delight:

Qui voet amer ne poet faillir d'amie,	Do you seek a lover? Her sweetheart be,
Car perdurable amour sanz variance	For in the Virgin dwells endless affection.
Remaint en luy, com celle q'est florie	Decked with all virtue is my Lady free,
De bien, d'onour, de joie et de plesance. <sup>122</sup>	With honour, joy, delight — and perfection.

*Cinkante Balades* LI concludes with a representation of pleasure — and most possibly the heavenly bliss — of serving the Virgin:

De tout mon coer jeo l'aime et serve et prise,	Bearing devotion, my heart to her flies,
Et amerai sanz nulle departie;	To serve my Lady with all constancy,
Par quoi j'esper d'avoir ma rewardise,	For I hope to attain the utmost prize,
Pour quelle jeo ma dame ades supplie:	The reward which is my daily plea:
C'est, qant mon corps lerra la compaignie	That when body and soul part company,
De m'alme, lors lui deigne en remembrance	She might make of our love a remembrance,
D'amour doner a moi le pourpartie,	And grant me a boon as I bend my knee,
Dont puiss avoir le ciel en heritance. <sup>123</sup>	Heaven unto my inheritance.

<sup>121</sup> CB LI, ll. 9–12.

<sup>122</sup> CB LI, ll. 13–16.

<sup>123</sup> CB LI, ll. 17–24.

In relationship with this Lady, body and soul may 'part company', but the lovers will not break faith. In fact, the division of body and soul is required for the ultimate satisfaction offered by the Virgin: heaven as an 'inheritance'. Ballade LI lacks a refrain because such an award is not to be repeated but made once at the final judgement through the Virgin's intercession. While other narrators in the *Cinkante Balades* may be caught in recurring cycles of fortune, the speaker of ballade LI inherits the Virgin's abode and models the linear reasoning through which he attained it.

With the final narrator's choice to adore the Mother of God, *Cinkante Balades* LI brings to fruition a poetic cycle that periodically refers to the female beloved as if she were the Virgin. Just as Amans projected a shadow of Mary onto Venus and many medieval romances and lyrics present an exalted lady as a Marian figure, the female speaker in the *Cinkante Balades*' poems of fortune and love is sometimes depicted in language suitable for the Virgin. Among previous Marian verses, *Balade XXI* describes the lady as 'celestine', 'divine', and empowered to govern the lover's body and soul.<sup>124</sup> The suitor compares his awakening to the plants opening under the sun, but even though the lady inspires creation, she herself remains, like the Virgin before and after the Annunciation, in an enclosed chamber because of 'honte' and 'paour' (bashfulness and trembling). The ballade's refrain proclaims that her innocence discourages the lover from any vulgarity.<sup>125</sup> The suitor in *Cinkante Balades*' XXII prays during church services to this incorruptible figure who fills his heart.<sup>126</sup> However, in XXXVII the suitor nevertheless expresses vulgar and predatory attitudes toward this Marian figure. He may acknowledge her incorruptibility by depicting this unattainable lady inside a *hortus conclusus*, but he spies on the 'flours' within her 'parclose'.<sup>127</sup> The presence of a chamberlain and of Danger discourage sexual innuendo, but the foolish lover, swept by May-time fervour, obsesses upon whether the 'flour se desclose' (flower discloses its inner self). This suitor with impure thoughts is unworthy to enter the Mary garden and by *Cinkante Balades* XL is comparing his chaste beloved to Helen of Troy, but the narrator of the final poem, who identifies a better love in the Virgin, evinces an elevated mind and discovers that the true Lady reigns there.

The accord between Nature and Reason promised in ballade L seems at least partially fulfilled in the cycle's encomium to the Virgin. It is clear that Mary's devotee in ballade LI has attained rational equilibrium. But what of Nature? The concluding poems of the *Cinkante Balades* avoid the landscape imagery that, in earlier ballades, provided a reflection or measure of

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<sup>124</sup> CB XXI, ll. 9, 11.

<sup>125</sup> CB XXI, l. 20.

<sup>126</sup> CB XXII, ll. 3–7.

<sup>127</sup> CB XXXVII, l. 8.

the lovers' feelings and a sense of how human nature aligns (or not) with the creation. While plants and wildlife flourish in the *Cinkante Balades*' verses on unsatisfied love, especially those on the unsuitable relationship between the first French-speaking suitor and his English lady, ballade LI contains neither flora nor fauna. It seems that both of Gower's ballade cycles associate the verdant green with riotous, inappropriate emotion, the *Traitié* eschewing any natural setting in order to focus on textual *exempla* against adultery and the *Cinkante Balades* featuring seasonal cycles to show lovers out of sync with Nature or silent songbirds mocking the lovers' outcries. For the *Traitié*, greenery would imply the flourishing of unfaithful passion; for the *Cinkante Balades* it is the background to natural developments — the blooming of flowers, the mating of birds — in which those who set their hearts on unfortunate choices have no part. In the unhappy valentines studied in this book's previous chapter, the lovers are at odds with an amorous parliament of fowls, and in the two poems directly following, the blossoms of May mock the human pair's withering love. In *Balades* LI Mary does not exist in this paradoxically budding and forbidding landscape, but rather she points to 'heaven' as an 'inheritance' over which she presides. She herself embodies the garden in which the lover will take spiritual 'plesance'.<sup>128</sup>

Since the springtime scenes in the *Cinkante Balades* are inimical to both lovers' games and the devotee's meditation, the coda to ballade LI gestures toward a receding courtly lawn. It implies that England itself — Mary's Dowry — must become the secular lovers' garden. As we have seen in Chapter Five, before the philosophical narrator's devotional ballades, the English lady who so boldly rejected a French suitor unites with a Henrician beloved and thus acknowledges her own country as the best of amorous settings. The coda, describing England under Henry IV, deploys phrasing similar to ballade LI's description of the Virgin's influence over lovers' hearts. While the Virgin brings 'bien, d'onour, de joie et de plesance', Henry offers peace and prosperity, as well as honour and joy. If LI is written to convert a wide audience to Marian devotion, that audience now has the opportunity to become like the English lady, a lover who is making a more rational choice in Henry IV.

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<sup>128</sup> CB LI, l. 16.

O gentile Engleterre, a toi j'escris,	O gentle England, to you I write,
Pour remembrer ta joie q'est nouvelle,	Commemorating new joy in the king.
Qe te survient du noble Roi Henri,	Hope arrived with Henry, your bright knight,
Par qui dieus ad redrescé ta querele:	Through whom God has made right everything.
A dieu purceo prient et cil et celle,	Let each man and woman in your land bring
Q'il de sa grace au fort Roi coroné	Prayers for grace toward the one newly crowned:
Doingt peas, honour, joie et prosperité.	May peace and prosperity with joy and honor abound.

In Marian ballade LI, Gower prays for heaven as an inheritance; in the verses to England, he proclaims Henry's Christ-like legacy. No longer does the threat of Venus's usurpation, as described in the *Vox Clamantis* and *Confessio Amantis* exist. As a demonstration of Henry's heritage, England becomes a garden of remembrance, 'commemorating new joy in the king'.

### Prophecy Fulfilled in the *Mirour de l'Omme*

While *Cinkante Balades* LI relates the fulfilment of the philosophical narrator's desires in the Virgin Mary, the conclusion of the *Mirour de l'Omme*, including prayers and a saint's life of the Virgin in the vein of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, expresses the fulfilment of prophecy, salvation history, and individual redemption through the Virgin's devotion.<sup>129</sup> These accomplishments of divine will are orchestrated through a series of annunciations in which an angel or a voice from heaven guides Mary and all humanity toward divine purposes. By telling the story of the Lady who held the omniscient, eternal God in her *hortus conclusus*, 'John' accesses and conforms to providential plans, thereby achieving spiritual self-actualization. He begins this discourse as a penitent, corrupted by Sin and her daughters and so debased as to have composed licentious songs. By singing 'un autre chancon' to the Virgin, 'John' hopes that his spirit will rise to join Mary in paradise's delights.<sup>130</sup> Mary is the garden in which Christian epiphanies

129 Thomas H. Bestul, arguing that the MO is a meditational text, links it to the *Meditationes vitae Christi*. See Thomas H. Bestul, 'Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme* and the Meditative Tradition', *Mediaevalia*, 16 (1990 [for 1993]), 307–28.

130 The MO's narrator promises another kind of song for the Virgin on l. 27347. For the MO narrator's repudiation of sinful song, see, for instance, 8149–51, 16940–41, and 92850–56.



and celestial culminations take place; she is called 'rose without thorns, perfume of balsam, [...] fleur-de-lis'.<sup>131</sup> Among the flowers and aromas of her paradisaical flesh reside the turtledove (often given in sacrifice) and the gentle dove (sign of the Holy Spirit), cooing of love and forgiveness.<sup>132</sup> Initially posing as a metonym for sinful humankind, 'John' finds that the sins against which he, like the Baptist, preached in earlier portions of the text are conquered in Mary, and the fear of apocalypse that he, like the Evangelist, aroused are calmed in her. 'John' relates the life of the Virgin according to the order of her joys and sorrows, and through these holy emotions, brings the reader as well as himself to the realization of the Word.

The *Mirour's* life of the Virgin concludes a long narrative that, as we saw in Chapter Three, relates the genesis of the vices and virtues and demonstrates the predominance of vice in every estate. R. F. Yeager argues that Gower added the life of the Virgin to the *Mirour* after establishing himself at St Mary Overie — that the poem's theology reflects the values of the Augustinian canons there, even if it comes as something of a surprise at the end of the text.<sup>133</sup> When we consider the *Mirour's* investment in Marian virtue and speech, however, and observe Mary's relationship to characters important to the poem's beginning (as we have done in Chapter Three), the hagiographical conclusion appears to satisfy more than defy expectations. Explaining ways in which the *Mirour* can appear disjunctive yet integrated at the same time, Maura Nolan claims that the poem is a patchwork of three different genres — the sermon on the vices and virtues, the estates satire, and the Marian hagiography — that work together to

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Three minstrels (Ben pensement, Bon fait, and Bon dit) play as the seven virtues marry Reason. See MO, ll. 10123–28. Complicating Gower's declaration that the MO's life of the Virgin is actually *un autre chancon*, Bullón-Fernández observes the courtly language that Gower uses to depict Mary. See Bullón-Fernández, 'Gower's Queer Poetics in the *Mirour de l'Omme*', pp. 34–35, 41–42.

131 MO, ll. 29929–31: *rose sanz espine [...] / Odour de balsme [...] / fleur du lys*.

132 MO, ll. 29931, 29935: *turtrelle, columbelle*. On the sensuality of the final prayer to the Virgin that presents her as a garden and other delights, see Nolan, 'Agency and the Poetics of Sensation', p. 229.

133 R. F. Yeager, 'Gower's French Audience: the *Mirour de l'Omme*'. *Chaucer Review*, 41 (2006), 111–37. Yeager's conclusion seems less likely after Martha Carlin's reassessment of the dates of Gower's residency at St Mary's. See Martha Carlin, 'Gower's Life', in *Historians on John Gower*, ed. by Stephen H. Rigby with Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2019), pp. 44–61. Carlin presents evidence that Gower resided mostly in Kent and did not occupy the house in Southwark until sometime early in 1387 (p. 54). This would mean the unlikelihood of Gower's appending the Marian conclusion to the MO a full decade after he originally completed it. In any case, as Martin Heale points out, the content of the MO has only tenuous associations between the Augustinian priory of St Mary's or other Augustinian textual networks. See Martin Heale, 'Monastic Life' in *Historians on John Gower*, ed. Stephen H. Rigby with Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2019), pp. 271–74.

pit a concept of Fortune against the unchanging Virgin.<sup>134</sup> While the representation of Fortune throughout the *Mirour*, in Nolan's estimation, is dynamic and chaotic, images of the Virgin are, in contrast, stable and peaceful in ways that underscore Mary's constancy. As we have already discovered, Mary and her minions in the *Mirour* work to deflect humanity from the temptations of the World inherent in Fortune. They transform the depravity of Sin and her daughters to spiritual discipline and thus secure humanity for Christ's redemption.

Not only parallels to Mary in earlier portions of the *Mirour*, but also the layout of the sole manuscript of this poem illuminate the threads that bind the concluding hagiography to the rest of the text.<sup>135</sup> The ending on the life of the Virgin uses the same ordination pattern as the rest of the manuscript, only more elaborately, as a way of showing how the concluding saint's life realizes the promises of earlier sections of the text. In other words, the manuscript ordination and decoration is itself prophetic, as the colours and patterns demarcating earlier episodes in the poem come into their glory in the life of the Virgin Mother. The manuscript is not illustrated, but illuminated capitals mark the rhetorical arrangement that culminates in fireworks of its own kind in the Marian section. From the beginning of the manuscript, we see half inch capitals at about every tenth line alternating in colour between red and blue, one-inch square capitals spaced farther apart to mark the poem's major sections, and a linear vertical decoration, often a spray of red and blue, shooting up or down the column from the larger capitals, providing an outer border to the beginning of each poetic line. In the final hagiographical section, although the same decorative arrangement appears, there are many more capitals and borders to emphasize the detailed subsets of the Virgin's life and the many appeals to her pity. The omnipresence of colourful borders imitates a fence around the Marian discourse, and the illuminated capitals offer portals to the life's many stations (Figure 4). These illuminated capitals mark successive occurrences of apostrophes to the Virgin, and the borders provide a network from these capitals to the summaries providing a gloss of the text. These summaries begin with the tag line 'ore dirra', indicating that now the narrator will speak on a new topic; the 'O' of direct, prayerful address and of the beginning of each summary is bound in a rubricated border, the comprehensive design of the manuscript enveloping and emphasizing the hagiographical conclusion (Figure 5). The *Mirour's* presentations of Marian rhetoric come to fruition in the life of the Virgin, as indicated by the ordination of the manuscript.

If the life of the Virgin is the fulfilment of the whole text and the culmination of the manuscript design, it is also the completion of 'John'

134 Nolan, 'Agency and the Poetics of Sensation', p. 215.

135 Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Additional 3035.

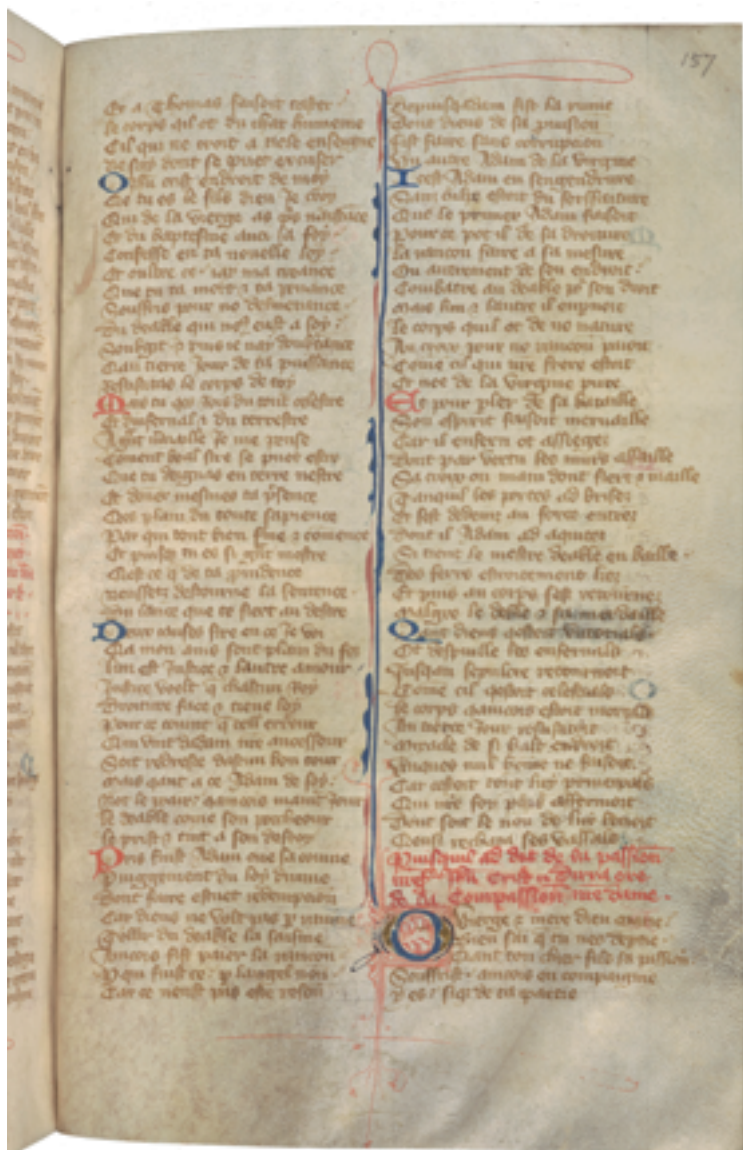


Figure 4. *Mirour de l'Homme*, sample of the manuscript's decorative programme. Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Additional 3035, fol. 157<sup>r</sup>. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

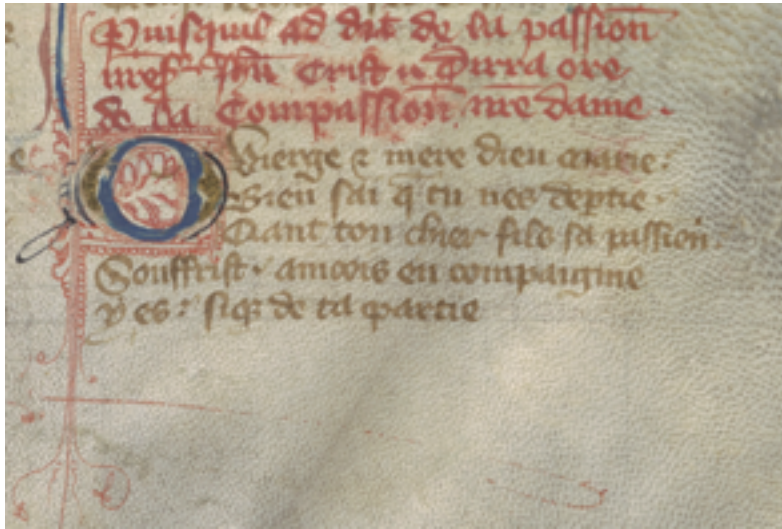


Figure 5. *Mirour de l'Homme*, detail, illuminated O. Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Additional 3035, fol. 157<sup>r</sup>. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

the narrator's spiritual progress. His prayers initiate and recur throughout the life of the Virgin.<sup>136</sup> The narrator explains his impulse to tell her story by impressing on the reader his corruption, sorrow because of it, and need for the restoration provided by the Virgin's marriage with God. He turns to her in prayer:

O mirer des tous mal, Marie  
A m'alme que ensi marrie  
Donnetz, ma dame, medicine  
Pour la santé que je supplie;  
Car mon pecché si fort me plie  
Qe j'en suy tout a la ruine,  
Si tu, ma dame, ove ta covine  
De la vertu quelle as divine  
Ne guarissetz la maladie [...].

O medic for all malady, Mary,  
For my soul that is so marred  
Give, my Lady, your medicine  
For the health that I beseech,  
Since such strong sin bends me,  
Makes of me a complete ruin,  
Unless you, my Lady, make the marriage  
Of your virtue which was prophesied,  
This malady might not abate [...].<sup>137</sup>

<sup>136</sup> MO, ll. 27421–30.

<sup>137</sup> MO, ll. 27421–29.

In the *Mirour*, whereas the marriage of the Sins with the World is constantly re-enacted in humanity's wicked deeds, so 'John' wishes that Mary's chaste nuptials with the divine would manifest itself in his own purification and healing. The Marian petition above, like others in the *Visio Anglie* and *Confessio Amantis*, opens the *hortus conclusus*, but unlike the other poems, the *Mirour* does not stop with a supplication and heavenly response. Instead, it lingers on the Virgin's entire biography as a means of accessing the Lady's divine power and retrieving holy medicine. This medicine manifests itself in lessons on the Virgin's joys and sorrows; Mary provides an exemplar of appropriate emotions in reaction to the life of Christ and a model for channelling these feelings so as to rise in righteousness. Her biography, in other words, demonstrates an internalized rhetoric of prayer that achieves the ends of discourse that Gower will later outline in the *Confessio Amantis*. In the *Mirour* 'John' finds himself so ill — so bent by temptation — as to need the extended regimen of rehearsing the Lady's entire life. He has, he confesses, incorporated all the seven deadly sins that the *Mirour* has shown to be the corrupting influence in humanity. Notwithstanding his citation of the Evangelist as the first authority for the *Mirour* and his Baptist-like preaching against the estates, 'John' is still a deeply flawed human being who must follow the prophets even more closely in venerating the Virgin in order to experience the promise of salvation. Indeed, the Virgin fulfils his saintly namesakes' prophecies, and he realizes a Johannine role in adhering to her. Therefore, he takes up the part of the Evangelist in overseeing the life of the Mother. One exculpatory act that 'John' can perform is to tell of the Lady 'in vernacular French for the information of the laity and a review for clerics'.<sup>138</sup>

Once 'John' turns to the life of Our Lady, immediately the narrative introduces a motif of annunciations through which prophecy is fulfilled.<sup>139</sup> These annunciations induce holy emotions in Mary and the others who receive them and model a divine rhetoric that sets the mind in alignment with the Word. For the first of these annunciations, Joachim, the faithful man who will become the Virgin's father, flees to the hillsides to become a shepherd after he has been shamed in the Temple, his offering rejected because he and his wife of twenty years are childless. While he is among the flocks, an angel comes to alleviate Joachim's humiliation: 'Do not fear',

138 MO, ll. 27477–80: *Par quoy en langue de romance / J'en fray un declaracioun, / As lays pour enformacioun, / Et a les clerks pour remembrance*. Bestul argues that the MO is a meditational text especially suited for a clerical audience. See Bestul, 'Gower's *Mirour de l'Homme* and the Meditative Tradition', pp. 307–28. Fisher calls the MO 'a private devotional document'. See John H. Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 104. Since the MO accommodates various genres, my reading of the poem regards it as both penitential and meditational, appropriate for both private devotions and public readings (perhaps in the priory's refectory or other reflective settings).

139 MO, ll. 27553–27600.

says the divine messenger, 'I come bearing news and comfort for your heart'.<sup>140</sup> The angel stresses God's pity for Joachim and desire to see the good man and all humanity in 'good cheer' and accord with God's love.<sup>141</sup> Both can be accomplished by blessing Joachim and his wife Anne with a daughter. It will be through this daughter who is to be called Mary, the angel reveals, that the prophecies shall be fulfilled and the messiah born in virgin flesh.<sup>142</sup> In Gower and in the *Legenda aurea*, upon which the *Mirour* relies heavily for its Marian conclusion, the Virgin's family thus understands her messianic role, but she, dedicated to the temple at a young age, does not. Therefore, Gabriel will come again to her in the poem's most celebrated Annunciation.<sup>143</sup>

The *Mirour* describes Mary's unwitting preparations for the Annunciation and her marriage to Joseph that sets the stage for it. She sometimes fasts in order to sharpen her focus on God, and through her pious efforts she earns God's protective love, resulting in presents from Paradise that make of her abode a garden — lilies and roses for her plaited wreaths delivered by a guiding angel.<sup>144</sup> A long poem mostly devoid of nature imagery while it details humanity's sins suddenly blossoms as the Virgin matures. As Alan of Lille writes, fasting chastens the flesh and frees the reason to fly heavenward; by the time of the Annunciation, Mary's concentration on the divine yields a vow of chastity in which she promises to give her body to God alone.<sup>145</sup> Having received paradisaal bouquets, she has become a deified garden; the realization of all prophecy to which she is necessary is signified by verdant growth. Her marriage to Joseph, required for the support of the Christ child yet to be announced, is accompanied by just such a leafy sign when Joseph is chosen among many candidates for Mary's spouse because he bears a blossoming rod.<sup>146</sup> Its shoots indicate spiritual fecundity and a willingness to live chastely; abashed as Joseph and Mary may be — and hardly eager for matrimony — the angel transforms their shame to confidence in the Lord by assuring them that carnal knowledge will not be required.<sup>147</sup> Joseph's subsequent departure for his own land and Mary's return to Nazareth allow the Virgin to devote herself fully to

140 MO, ll. 27562–63: *Et si luy dist: N'eietz paour / Je viens nouvelles apporter, / Et pour ton cuer reconforter [...]*.

141 MO, l. 27576: *bonne chere*.

142 MO, ll. 27577–88. The annunciation to Joachim is contained in the *Legenda aurea* #131. See *Legenda Aurea*, ed. by Th. Graesse, 3rd edn (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller Verlag, 1969).

143 MO, ll. 27913–72. Mary's Annunciation is in the *Legenda aurea* #51. See n. 138.

144 MO, ll. 27721–32.

145 Alan of Lille, *Summa Quoniam Homines*, ed. P. Glorieux, *AHDLM* xx: (1954), 113–364, chapter 34. MO, ll. 27735–36: *Secretement sa chasteté / Vouoit [...]*.

146 MO, ll. 27805–28. At 27824–25, the sign is made manifest to Joseph and the crowd: *Joseph sa verge fuist portant / Que s'en flourist [...]*.

147 MO, ll. 27829–40. The angel's reassurance comes at 27835: *Disant que chastes viveroit*.

God; in comparison to the other marriages depicted in the *Mirour* — the righteous union of Anne and Joachim, the nuptials of Sin's daughters, and even those of the Marian Virtues — this marriage is governed in a way that gives God special pleasure, creating a suitable platform for the advent of the Christ child.<sup>148</sup>

'John' declares Mary and Joseph's dedication to God an exemplar of 'good love', allowing divine mercy to spread abroad on earth.<sup>149</sup> In a series of rapt apostrophes the narrator claims that this mercy imbues him with the grace to continue toward the *Mirour's* Marian conclusion — to advance to a discussion of the Annunciation.<sup>150</sup> 'John' thus chronicles his Marian spiritual healing according to the episodes of the Virgin's biography that grace prepares him to write. As he reveals messianic prophecies and charts their manifestation in the lives of Mary and Jesus, he realizes the potential of his first name. He participates in a chain of grace through which Mary's ardent attachment to God transmits to him the capacity to speak of Love's emergence in the human realm and to feel it for himself.

Setting the scene for the Annunciation, Gower's poem, like the *Legenda aurea*, omits any details concerning Mary's activities upon the angel's arrival, the Virgin's stillness implying her immersion in contemplation. The *Mirour* explains that the Virgin had turned her passionate heart toward God: 'There came a day of the week when the Virgin's thoughts turned to holy love-drury, and when she was alone in her chamber, without chamberlain or chambermaid [... at this time] arrived an angel from the Messiah'.<sup>151</sup> Not spinning or reading but in fervent prayer and languishing in sacred devotion, Mary seems to be awaiting the arrival of a lover and yet least expecting him at that moment. Startled, she nevertheless responds perfectly to Gabriel's announcement: 'Here behold me, the handmaiden of God; may your word be all mine'.<sup>152</sup> In answer to her obedience, the Word is hers — and humanity's, just as Gabriel had promised Joachim. From this moment on, an angel or a voice from on high directs her steps when trouble arises, when Herod plans to slaughter the innocents or the disciples feel fear after the crucifixion. In this way, Mary both fulfils messianic prophecies and receives them; as 'John' writes of her life, he channels the promises and warnings delivered by the Baptist and the Evangelist and begins to understand them from the point of view of the Virgin, who nourished them all in her womb.

148 MO, ll. 27850–52: *Nientmeinz selonc la viel usage / Fuist fait par juste governage / Le matrimoine au dieu plesance.*

149 MO, ll. 27865, 27869: *bon amour.*

150 MO, ll. 27877–912. The apostrophes that initiate the stanzas in this section are as follows: *O comme l'amour fuist covenable* (27877); *O la mercy* (27889); *O dame* (27901).

151 MO, ll. 27913–17: *Avint un jour de la semeine, / Quant ses pensers la vierge meine / A la divine druerie, / Et deinz sa chambre fuist soleine [...]. / Survint un angel de Messie.*

152 MO, ll. 27965–66: *La dieu ancelle vei me cy, / Soit ta parole tout moye.*

In addition to being essential for Mary, the *Mirour's* narrator, and all humanity to receive and participate in prophetic communications with the divine, the Annunciation, as 'John' observes, is Mary's first joy in a life of reflecting her responses to Christ's mission.<sup>153</sup> The Virgin's emotional life provides clues about the fruition of prophecies, and, unlike the fluctuating feelings of the lovers in the *Confessio Amantis* or *Cinkante Balades*, Mary's emotions reflect the progress of Jesus's mission and point to the stability of God, rather than the mutability of the world. In addition, her joy in Jesus's nativity or miraculous works and her sorrow at the crucifixion and other times of separation from Jesus model appropriate reactions to the life of Christ and in so doing create a text that, in Thomas H. Bestul's estimation, is suitable for meditation and *imitatio Christi*.<sup>154</sup> As I have argued in *Scribit Mater*, Mary's affective responses to Christ's life as Gower characterizes them not only provide cues for the meditator, but also establish the Virgin's wisdom.<sup>155</sup> Her affective reactions, such as thrilling to the obeisance of a medicinal tree in Egypt — showing happiness that the plant bows to acknowledge the Christ child, its creator — indicate her understanding of Jesus's divinity.<sup>156</sup> In emotional registers that reflect holy truths, the Virgin undergoes a rhetorical process valued by Gower in which affect moves the will toward understanding. As theorized in 'Gower's Rethorique', emotions operate upon the will through the creative force of the mighty Word and thus lead the hearer to belief. Mary's actions dramatize a holy rhetoric that converts the faithful to a stronger conviction of how and to what effect messianic prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus. If the *Cinkante Balades* culminates in a reasonable love of the Virgin, the hagiographical conclusion of the *Mirour* emphasizes the divinely attuned affect that can lead the will to reason, God, love of divine things, and trust in providence. Mary's rejoicing at Jesus's birth or fainting at the foot of the cross betray the internal upheaval that accompanies human comprehension of Christ's sufferings and triumphs, but the vacillations of feeling lead to stable, eternal love. Before Pentecost, the disciples gather around the Virgin because she incorporates all Christian learning and inspires both confidence in it and passageways toward it through displays of emotion.<sup>157</sup> Her happiness in expecting the Holy Spirit fills them with hope until, like her, they are endowed with sanctified language for witnessing.

According to the *Mirour*, Mary's superior understanding, betrayed by emotional responses, renders her a prophet among prophets. The woman who held God within her *hortus conclusus* holds all knowledge

153 MO, l. 27971: *c'estoit la primere Joye* [...].

154 Bestul, 'Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*', pp. 307–28.

155 I discuss the wisdom inherent in the Virgin's affective responses in *Scribit Mater*, pp. 36–45.

156 The episode of the obeisance of the medicinal tree occurs in MO, ll. 28297–28308.

157 MO, ll. 29293–304.



— including that of past, present, and future — and bears out the truth of prophecy when she bears the Christ child. The angels whom God sends to minister to her after the crucifixion ensure her complete awareness of providential plans. The two prophets in whom 'John' is invested — the Baptist and Evangelist — serve her, the Baptist *in utero* bowing to the Virgin who is pregnant with the Christ child and the Evangelist showing vigilance in caring for the Virgin at the end of her life. In the case of the Baptist, veneration for the Virgin catalyses his ability to witness and to transfer that ability to the narrator expressing Mary's life story. 'John' outlines the chain of the Virgin's prophetic influence from John the Baptist to himself. After relating the events surrounding the Visitation and the foetal Baptist's ecstatic response to the Virgin, 'John' proclaims: 'O what a clear revelation! John, before his birth, honoured and acknowledged his God, who similarly was not yet born. Before his tongue was enabled by speech, [...] he laboured in his mother's womb to prepare the way of the Lord'.<sup>158</sup> As with Mary, the Baptist's feelings are guided by God toward the expression of the truth; once 'enabled by speech', he is an incomparable preacher. In the *Mirour*, the Baptist's witness prepares a way not only for Christ, but also for the narrator to appeal for divine understanding. Having told the Baptist's infancy story, 'John' erupts in serial apostrophes to God or the Lady as a way of broaching the paradoxes or blessings deriving from the Annunciation.<sup>159</sup> Similarly, after telling of Christ's baptism, with an emphasis on the Baptist's penance and effective preaching, the narrator again expresses his desire to participate in Marian affect and prophetic understanding. In two fervent apostrophes 'John' calls out 'O Virgin' and 'O Lady' as he entreats Mary for the joy she felt in holding God in her womb and for the certainty of salvation.<sup>160</sup> The *Mirour's* narratives concerning the Baptist, a prophet who adores the Virgin, are significant not only for the narrator's connection with his saintly namesake, but also for establishing a prophetic Marian community, bound by an ardent attachment to Christ, that seeks eternal wisdom and obedience to God. 'John' is a part of this community not only through the Baptist, but also through the Evangelist, whose support for the Virgin at the end of her life models the Marian service to be undertaken by the *Mirour's* narrator.

Throughout the *Mirour*, Mary's status as a prophet evincing divine truths through her joys and sorrows remains constant. The feminine

158 MO, ll. 28009–17: *O quelle aperte demoustrance! / Jehans, ainz q'il avoit naiscance, / Son dieu, auci qui n'estoit né, / Honourt et fait reconoissance, / Ainz que sa langue de parlande / Ascunement estoit doé, / [...]. Il s'est el ventre travaillé / Pour faire a dieu sa pourvoiance [...].*

159 MO, ll. 28057, 28093, 28105, 28117. These apostrophes are (in order of the lines as listed) *O cil q'ert Rois sur toute Empire; O dame; O dieus; and again, O dieus.*

160 MO, ll. 28573, 28585: *O tu virgine; O dame.* The whole passage governed by these apostrophes proceeds until l. 28596.

roles through which she expresses her fervent love for Christ, however, alternate between mother and bride. 'John' describes Mary's boundless affection for Jesus first as a virgin attunement to her divine lover at the Annunciation and then as motherly dedication to raise and support Jesus in his godly mission. During the crucifixion scene, Mary's motherhood reaches a climax and finally gives way to conjugal devotion. At the foot of the cross, 'John' shows, Mary's last maternal act is more agonizing than any pains of childbirth and paradoxically includes Jesus's termination of her role as his parent.<sup>161</sup> When Christ transfers Mary's motherhood to the apostle, she experiences both God's kindness in securing her future and disappointment in this new kinship with her nephew the Evangelist, a poor substitute for the holy son. As 'John' comments, 'If in lieu of your light you pick up a lantern instead, I would not marvel if you were then equipped to see.'<sup>162</sup> In this ironic expression, the Evangelist, known for his spiritual sight, cannot aid the Virgin in 'seeing'. Identifying with his saintly namesake's insufficiency, 'John' declares himself inadequate to curate the story of the Virgin's compassion, but insists that he understands this much: that her extreme grief arises from her great knowledge concerning Christ's divinity and from the realization that she has lost a lover superior to any other.<sup>163</sup> Her agony is intensified when Jesus calls out from the cross.<sup>164</sup> The one who bore the Word, in hearing his dying cries, faints as the creative force leaves the earth as well as her body. She will now seek eternal life through the role of the bride and a mystical union with the godhead. Already spattered with Christ's blood as he is brought down from the cross, Mary casts herself on top of Jesus's body, mingling their fluids as if in sex and wanting to melt into the beloved.<sup>165</sup> Eventually leaving the Evangelist's protection to live again in Jerusalem, Mary spends much of her time after the Ascension at Jesus's tomb in contemplation of her lover. As 'John' remarks concerning the Virgin's devotion to her divine spouse: 'I am confident and certain that the love you bear toward your Son involved such discipline that no one in the world or among the saints in Paradise could well understand your union.'<sup>166</sup> Mary's ecstatic devotion is the result of disciplining her joys and sorrows to reflect God's incarnate experiences. It is by striving for such a love that the human will can draw close to the Word.

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161 MO, ll. 29111–12: *Le douleur de la femme enceinte / A ta douleur ne ressemblant.*

162 MO, ll. 29061–64: *Si prens en lieu de ta lumere / La lantern en eschangement: / Du quoy j'nay mervaillement / Si celle espeie lors te fiere.*

163 MO, ll. 28921–32, 29077–88.

164 MO, ll. 29017–28.

165 MO, ll. 29113–24.

166 MO, ll. 29395–400: *Car j'en suy tout certains et fis / L'amour que portas a ton fils / Estoit de tiele discipline / Qe tout le monde au droit devis / Ne tous les seintz de paradis / N'en porront conter la covine.*

From this moment on in the *Mirour*, Mary regains her role as bride, pressing forward to the culmination of her nuptials in heaven, through which the narrator hopes to share in the Virgin's celestial bliss, to enter into salvation by means of her garden. 'I wish now to narrate your joys', 'John' proclaims; 'then I may mount [to heaven], my Lady, under your protection.'<sup>167</sup> Mary's wedding to Christ finally fulfils the *Mirour's* promise that Virtues marriage to Reason will counteract the incestuous liaisons of Sin and her daughters. The Virgin's establishment as queen of heaven enthroned with her son and bridegroom represents not only the spiritual reversal of incest, but also the return of God's betrothed, the one who exercises reason over temptation and practises contemplation on holy love, to her divine maker.<sup>168</sup> Just as in John of Garland's *Epithalamium Beate Virginis Marie*, this return of the bride's soul to the godhead realizes the principles of all knowledge and the dictates of all prophecy. This epiphanic cycle of the bride remains a mystery in the *Mirour*. That the Virgin's wedding includes her receipt of a crown and the 'dowry of heaven', the *Mirour's* narrator allows, but he is otherwise silent on the liturgical and conceptual details.<sup>169</sup> In contrast, the ceremony for Sin's daughters had been lavishly described in previous sections of the poem. The *Mirour* proves the wedding of the Sins to be haughtily elaborate, that of the Virtues simply holy, and that of the Virgin ineffable. Instead of dwelling upon Mary's heavenly rite, 'John' praises Christ as the best of lovers, superlatively heroic, beautiful, wealthy, well-born, courteous, and generous.<sup>170</sup> Christ's generosity to his bride was thought to yield the gift of impassibility, a divine trait in keeping with Gower's emphasis on the seclusion and integrity of the Virgin. On Christ's presents to his bride, Robert Grosseteste in the *De dotibus* declares *impassibilitas* a most important dowry, ensuring the impermeability of the bride to worldly enticement and ruin.<sup>171</sup> The heavenly nuptials, granting the Virgin impassibility even in the face of death and decay, seal the *hortus conclusus* in which 'John' has placed all his hope. In the paradisa-

167 MO, ll. 29194–96: [D]esore vuil conter / Tes joyes, dont pourray monter, / Ma dame, en ta proteccioun.

168 Irvin argues that virginity is 'sexy' in Gower, that it draws God to Mary and sadly, rapists to maidens. See Irvin, 'Chastity, Complaint, and Lucrece's *Vox Clamantis*', pp. 67–68. Irvin cites MO, ll. 8699, 16835–36, and 18332–36 to make the case that the 'power of Mary's chastity and virginity attracts the love of God, and this is eerily similar to the *Mirour's* incestuous origin narrative of sin' (68). As we have seen in Chapter Three of this book, however, Mary and her sister Virtues reflect the sinfulness of the MO's worldly characters in order to subsume and transform vice.

169 Mary receives a crown at MO, l. 29748 and the 'dowry of heaven' at MO, ll. 29866–67: *le doaire / De ciel*.

170 MO, ll. 29437–508.

171 Joseph Goering, 'The *De Dotibus* of Robert Grosseteste', *Mediaeval Studies*, 44 (1982), 83–109. See also Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 37–39.

garden with Christ the beloved, Mary rises above fleshly corruption in a way that not even the ascetic Baptist could do; she vanquishes incest's tyrannical hold, strengthened by Venus and Cupid, over the human soul. The Baptist died proclaiming its wickedness, but Mary provides an eternal release to 'John' and all humanity.

The Virgin's contributions to the fulfilment of messianic prophecy and the ritual enclosure of the heavenly garden are figured by flourishing plants in the *Mirour* — by the budding of Joseph's rod, the delectable aromas emitted from the Virgin's dead body, and the palm of paradise waved at the Virgin's funeral procession.<sup>172</sup> The *Mirour de l'Omme* presents few natural images, but all of them cluster around the Virgin's spiritual fruitfulness. In the narrator's final prayer for her intercession, he meditates upon Mary's many names, identifying her as a garden of sensual delights: she is the olive tree whose fruit sharpens the taste, the moon whose luminosity guides the sight, myrrh whose perfume invades the olfactory sense, the rose whose thorns being absent allows a soft touch, and a dove whose dulcet sound is a pleasure to hear.<sup>173</sup> These names derive from Richard of St Laurent's *De laudibus beatae Mariae Virginis* and depend upon the medieval belief that only metaphor could express the mystery inherent in the Virgin Mother, who contained what would seem to be uncontainable: the creator and all creation. In Gower's book of the *Mirour de l'Omme* — a poem that rarely dwells upon landscape descriptions — the Virgin embodies sensory delights offered by the earth in an enclosed and sanctified space, beyond temptation. Although it might seem that Marian metaphors in the *De laudibus* tradition absent the Virgin and disembody her, Gower adds them as a crown to a detailed life of a joyfully or sorrowfully embodied Mother of God. Acknowledging the metaphors' power and significance in the *Mirour*, Maura Nolan argues that this 'lyrical prayer' on the Virgin's names participates in a 'poetics of sensation' — one that 'divulges Gower's fascination with the capacity of the aesthetic to mirror and to evoke the divine'.<sup>174</sup> The abundance of Mary's corporeal garden attracts Jesus to the Virgin's humble enclosure and signifies the fruition of the prophet's sayings on salvation.

Because the single manuscript of the *Mirour* has lost its final leaves, we cannot hear the narrator's concluding attempt at intimacy with the Virgin and her son. Once the *hortus conclusus* is shut between the boards of the codex and quiet reigns where the text has spoken, Mary, whose biblical silence often swells with the knowledge of salvation history, remains the audience of a new song in her honour and the advocate for the narrator's

172 Mary's dead body is described as sweet-smelling at MO, l. 29660. The palm of paradise is delivered by an angel at MO, l. 29618.

173 MO, ll. 29917–40.

174 Nolan, 'Agency and the Poetics of Sensation', pp. 233, 241.

salvation.<sup>175</sup> 'John' has succeeded as promised in rejecting the frivolous ditties that he composed in his youth and the lyrics of the Devil and Sin's daughters. Gower's 'autre chançon' of the Virgin, according to Robert R. Edwards, 'is distinguished by a narrative arc moving from sorrow to joy', a movement reflecting the Virgin's Christo-centric experiences, according to hagiographical traditions, and her role as an affective model for believers who promises their eventual celestial joy.<sup>176</sup> Mary converts the faithful through her emotional intelligence that inspires in others a motion of the will toward right belief and the kind of Marian rhetoric taught earlier in the *Mirour*. Mary embodies and conveys the Word, both in her *hortus conclusus* and in the compositions of her devotees such as 'John'. Singing to the bride of Christ in the sensory language of the Song of Songs, 'John' invokes the prophecy of Christ's nuptials with his mother that signals Mary's merciful presence in heaven. Her 'wedding bouquet' of roses, lilies, and other fragrant plants listed in the final prayer exude the promise of spiritual fruit, and 'John' hopes to enter the paradisaal garden once the Virgin has interceded on his behalf.

## Conclusion

Gower's concluding appeals to the Virgin in the *Visio Anglie* and *Mirour de l'Omme*, as well as his Supplication to Venus in the *Confessio Amantis*, reveal a trend throughout his trilingual poetry to seek resolution from a deified feminine source when masculine politics, preaching, and defences have failed. The *Cinkantes Balades*' final poem on the Virgin's perdurable love expresses the spiritual security available to those who make such appeals. In all these poetic works, the merciful woman is the final audience and discursive end; the verdant imagery surrounding her signifies the versified garden that achieves closure by her will and her blessing. Whether the setting for her rhetorical reign is the wild sea of the *Visio*, the rosary retreat of the *Confessio*, the abandoned lovers' green of the *Cinkante Balades*,

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175 Cleo McNelly Kearns discusses the Virgin's rhetoric of silence on Golgotha. 'As we have seen', Kearns comments, 'Mary's role as witness to the suffering on Golgotha is crucial to the implicit invocation of this promise [of salvation]. It is an invocation, however, that takes place largely in silence. We have already noted, with Auerbach and others, the importance of silence in the narrative of Abraham's ascent to Moriah. Mary's silence on Golgotha is equally powerful and in much the same way'. Cleo McNelly Kearns, *The Virgin Mary, Monotheism, and Sacrifice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 192.

176 Robert R. Edwards, *Invention and Authorship in Medieval England* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2017), p. 70.

or the celestial paradise of the *Mirour*, Mary, containing the Word and all creation, brings 'John's words and creative efforts to a close. John Gower closed his own life in a Marian context when he made his last testament on the feast of the Assumption.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Carlin, 'Gower's Life', p. 85.

## Renaissance Receptions of Gowerian *Repetitio*

Throughout this book we have seen how John Gower worked within various classical and medieval rhetorical traditions. The *artes dictaminis*, *poetriae*, and *praedicandi*, the theories of Aristotle, Cicero, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, and John of Garland, the biblical and apocryphal models for effective speaking modelled by John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, and the Virgin Mary — all of these contributed to frameworks for Gower's poetry. As a coda to a wide-ranging discussion of rhetorical teachings that supported Gower's oeuvre, this conclusion narrows in focus to examine the *Confessio Amantis*'s privileging of the figure of *repetitio* and of other figures of speech involving repetition. Chapter One observes that such reiterative phrasing occurs throughout Gower's corpus, but it is a special feature of the plain style in the *Confessio Amantis*. As it happens, the Middle English use of *repetitio* — the recurrence of the same word — is one important way that Gower's poems influenced rhetorical study and writing in the generation after him and beyond. By assessing the *Confessio*'s uses of *repetitio*, we will explore the methods of eloquence through which Gower himself was understood into the Renaissance as a master rhetorician. To do this, we will look at the pedagogical uses of one fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Confessio Amantis*, connections between Gower's Middle English and Latin learning in Ben Jonson's *English Grammar*, and Gower's role as translator and storyteller in Shakespeare and Wilkins's *Pericles*. In all these receptions of Gower's rhetoric, a respect for the poet's various uses of repetition is key, repetition of syntactical phrases and of narrative patterns that loop the reader again and again into the curve of Gower's message.

### Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5<sup>1</sup>

We begin with a manuscript of the *Confessio Amantis*, Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5, that was copied around 1450 to preserve the earliest

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<sup>1</sup> I am especially grateful to Eve Salisbury, who collaborated with me in the early phases of research on Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5 and co-authored with me the paper 'From Treasure Trove to Drawer in Disarray: Newberry Library, MS 33.5,' which we delivered to the New Chaucer Society in Reykjavik, Iceland in July, 2014. Any comments made in this

version of the poem, emphasize repetitive figures of speech (especially anaphora), and eventually to reflect, in a reassembling of Books 6 and 7, a particular understanding of the subject of rhetoric in Gower.<sup>2</sup> (For the reassembling of Books 6 and 7 see the table at the end of this chapter.) Underscoring figures of repetition through spacing and bolder ink, the Newberry manuscript's scribe must have been responding to an order by the first purchaser of the manuscript, someone obviously interested in the force of Gower's reiterative elocution.<sup>3</sup> This interest — and the resulting emphasis on *repetitiones* — signalled the manuscript's potential as a tool for teaching composition and rhetorical theory, and it could have encouraged an anonymous teacher to refashion the book for liberal arts teaching.<sup>4</sup> The radical rearrangement of the *Confessio*'s Books 6 and 7 in Newberry MS 33.5, most likely taking place between the late fifteenth and early seventeenth century, captures a pedagogical use of the *Confessio Amantis* that aligns the poem's treatment of rhetoric with theology (in opposition to necromancy) and with the human obligation to govern the world through effective speech.<sup>5</sup> Reiterative figures of speech made

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chapter concerning the productivity of this manuscript's damage for scholarship I have formed in my discussions with her.

- 2 The dating of the manuscript is in slight dispute. Macaulay declares the manuscript late 15th C; similarly, Pearsall and Mooney note that it was created in the 'second half' of the 1400s. See Macaulay, *Complete Works*, 1, p. cli, and Derek Pearsall and Linne Mooney, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the English Manuscripts of John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2021), p. 273. However, the Newberry Library Catalogue establishes the date at 1450. See Paul Saenger, *A Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Western Manuscript Books at the Newberry Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989), 1–1.
- 3 On collaborations between scribes and those who ordered manuscripts in the late Middle Ages, see Erik Kwakkel, 'Decoding the Material Book: Cultural Residue in Medieval Manuscripts', in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, ed. by Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 65–70.
- 4 By studying the composition and transmission of Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5, this chapter bears out the comparison made by Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen of 'the manuscript life cycle' to 'the human life cycle'. See Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen, Introduction, in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, ed. by Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 4. In this case, the 'DNA' encoded by the scribe reveals itself in Renaissance liberal arts teachings and the values of later bibliophiles who purchased the book as a representative of great English achievements in the field of literature. For these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century book preservationists, Seth Lerer's following point rings true: 'What was done *with* and *to* books matters as much as how they were read'. See Seth Lerer, 'Bibliographic Theory and the Textuality of the Codex: Toward a History of the Premodern Book', in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, ed. by Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 17.
- 5 Since no commentators or signatories mention the revised order of Books 6 and 7 until Macaulay in his introduction to the CA manuscripts, it is impossible to pin down the date of this reorganization. However, it makes sense to locate it in the era in which manuscripts



prominent by Newberry MS 33.5's inscription underline these themes and trends.

Owned in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century by merchants and later by gentry or nobles, signed by the famous eighteenth-century antiquarian Thomas Martin, and brought to Castle Howard at an undetermined date, Newberry MS 33.5 (formerly the Castle Howard manuscript or Hd in Macaulay's list) currently resides in Chicago's Newberry Library after being purchased from the Louis H. Silver family.<sup>6</sup> Newberry

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were still being used for reading and teaching, sometimes simultaneously with printed books. For an excellent scholarly anthology combining analysis of Gower's poems in both manuscript and print, see Martha Driver, Derek Pearsall, and R. F. Yeager, eds., *John Gower in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2020).

- <sup>6</sup> Signs of late fifteenth-century / early sixteenth-century ownership include signatures by various merchants. On f. 110 is written 'Per me Thomas Goldesmyth, the ywng' and on f. 29<sup>v</sup>, running lengthwise in the centre column and again on 69<sup>v</sup>, the name 'Thon Cok' can be seen. According to Kate Harris, Thomas Goldsmyth may be the grocer mentioned in the Acts of Court of the Mercers Company in the year 1496, and Cok, whose name exists in the same records, may have been associated with the Merchant Adventurers from 1518 through 1528. See Kate Harris, 'Ownership and Readership: Studies in the Provenance of the Manuscripts of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 1993), pp. 207–08. It may be that the manuscript passed from Goldesmyth to Cok. Pertaining to the manuscript's acquisition by a noble family, the sixteenth-century signature of Thomas Bold occurs on the manuscript's final flyleaf. On the Bold family, see DNB II, 778–79. On Thomas Martin of Palgrave, see DNB XII, 1182–83 and David Stoker, 'The Ill-Gotten Library of "Honest Tom" Martin', *Aberystwyth University*, October, 1990, <<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/196350281.pdf>>. Additionally, on the opening fly leaf there is G. C. Macaulay's note on having borrowed the manuscript from Castle Howard in order to create his edition. Corroborating the Howard family's ownership of this manuscript, George James Howard, Frederick Howard Carlisle, George Augustus Selwyn, and R. E. G. Kirk in *The Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle Preserved at Castle Howard* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1897) mention this manuscript in an addendum to the Introduction. The manuscript described there is certainly Newberry MS 33.5, since the authors note a codex of 110 leaves on parchment with double columns (xxxviii), for which 'the commencement is lost' and cite the line upon which Newberry begins (xxxvii). It is curious that a text that must have been in the Howard family for a century or more would have been added to the major list in this haphazard way. The manuscript was at Castle Howard by circa 1800, but its arrival date is uncertain. George Ornsby (*Selections from the Household Books of Lord W. Howard* [Durham: Andrews & Co., 1878], p. 486, no. 18) declares that it was owned by Lord William Howard (1563–1640). Pearsall and Mooney (*Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 277) observe the provenance of Charles Howard (1629–85) but admit that the ownership of Thomas Martin would not have permitted the manuscript to permanently reside with the Howards until its auctioning in the modern era. For more detail on how the manuscript probably came to Thomas Martin and became a part of his estate sale, see fn 54 below. My own view is that it returned to or came to Castle Howard through Frederick Howard (1748–1825) from the library of John Patterson, who owned it in 1791. For proof of Patterson's ownership, see the *Catalogus Manuscriptorum* governing the sale of manuscripts from Thomas Martin's estate, with its inclusion of two *Confessio* manuscripts numbered 418.1.13 and a note at the bottom indicating Patterson's possession. Of the two manuscripts, the one in Martin's description that is 'imperfect in

MS 33.5 reveals late medieval scribal methods for noting figures of speech, renaissance habits of rhetorical instruction, and the longstanding patriotic fervour that lauded Gower's linguistic practices and theories. Newberry MS 33.5 is a ruin of a manuscript, with its first seventeen leaves missing and significant water damage to both the beginning and ending of the codex,<sup>7</sup> but the manuscript is significant — damaged as it is — because its imperfections have so much to tell us about the reception of Gower's reiterative rhetoric in the fifteenth century and beyond. Newberry MS 33.5 is a perfect example of how privileging the most intact and aesthetically pleasing manuscripts can derail researchers from determining exactly how medieval texts were well-worn and used.<sup>8</sup>

Not only the elements and an unknown impulse to excise the beginning defaced Newberry MS 33.5. Sometime before the codex's last binding, another reader — interested in the reiterative rhetoric passages in the book and very possibly a teacher — reshuffled the pages of Books 6 and 7. Whoever supported Newberry MS 33.5's last binding preserved this rearrangement that, as I will argue, expresses a pedagogical reception of the poem's rhetorical teachings in *repetitio*. Eighteenth-century boards covering Newberry MS 33.5 suggest that the manuscript's last binding might have occurred under the ownership of Thomas Martin, who devoted much of his life to conserving books and prominently planted his signature

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the first book' is most likely our text. The *Catalogus* can be found in Norwich, Norfolk County Records Office (NNAS C3/2/11/1). After Martin's death in penury (1771), the codices that had not been sold off to support him during his lifetime passed into a variety of hands, sometimes for resale. Frederick Howard might have purchased the manuscript from Patterson or another to honour his wife, Margaret Caroline Leveson Gower, though her paternal ancestors were not descended from the medieval poet. After the Earl of Carlisle had auctioned the book, Chicago lawyer and owner of Gold Coast Hotels and well-known book collector, Louis H. Silver affixed his stamp on the first flyleaf, and the Newberry Library seal is just below. On the sale of the Silver collection to the Newberry Library in 1964, see J. W. Carter, 'Commentary on the Disposal of the late Louis H. Silver's Library', *Antiquarian Bookman*, 34 (1964), 1952–54 and 'John Fleming: An Inventory of His Papers in the Manuscript Collection at the Harry Ransom Center', *Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center*, <<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/uthrc/00697/00697-P.html>>.

<sup>7</sup> With seventeen leaves at the start of the book lost, the *Confessio Amantis* begins at l. 3305 on the first leaf of the third quire, just before the conclusion of 'The Tale of Three Questions'. An anonymous seventeenth-century owner of the manuscript, identifying the text as a variant of the definitive edition produced by Thomas Berthelette in 1554, wrote on the initial flyleaf that '[t]his Book is Imperfect, tile the latter end of the first Book'. This owner's comment establishes a *terminus ante quem* of circa 1700 for the extraction of the first two quires. Macaulay and Saenger, as well as Pearsall and Mooney, corroborate this owner's description but suggest no reason for it. Plausible explanations include environmental damage, a desire to separate introductory matter from the body of the poem, and religious or political repugnance to the poem's explicitly medieval Catholic frame.

<sup>8</sup> On the topic of the uses to which early books were put, see William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

on the first flyleaf of this one.<sup>9</sup> Martin would have had the codex rebound for pride of ownership and posterity, but someone from an earlier century reorganized the *Confessio*'s treatment of the liberal arts when the quires were unbound, and Martin, who possessed more than one *Confessio Amantis* in his vast collection, might not have noticed.<sup>10</sup> In fact, Macaulay was the first to record that the manuscript's leaves from folio 66 onward 'have been much disarranged in the binding'.<sup>11</sup>

Candidates for perpetrators of the manuscript's disarrangement include those whose late fifteenth- to seventeenth-century signatures mark the pages of Newberry MS 33.5, as well as the household tutors who worked for them. The verso side of folio 110 notes: 'item of Thomas Flynn' and 'Per me Thomas Goldsmyth the Ywng', followed by Goldsmyth's signature and late Middle English lines on the ephemerality of life.<sup>12</sup> Goldsmyth's late medieval language indicates very early ownership of Newberry MS 33.5 and corroborates Kate Harris's theory that the signature may represent a family of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century grocers.<sup>13</sup> The verses following the signature may reflect use of the manuscript as a teaching tool and a copy book, such use being an inducement for the reorganization of the manuscript's rhetoric section. Merchant class ownership of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* was not unusual, as Lynn Arner, documenting Gower's popularity among even the upper rungs of the artisan class, has reported, and use of manuscript margins for composition practice was common.<sup>14</sup>

Other potential candidates for the rearrangement of Newberry MS 33.5 include the Bold family of Lancashire. Thomas Bold's sixteenth-century signature on the recto side of the waterlogged last leaf indicates

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Martin, DNB 12, 1182–83.

<sup>10</sup> On Martin's *Catalogus Manuscriptorum* and *Confessio* manuscripts that came into the possession of John Patterson, see footnote 6 above. Martin calls the two *Confessio* manuscripts eventually purchased by Patterson 'folio class. 2' and describes the codices in the following way: 'Gower de Confessione amantis. A very fair copy on vellum, with initial letters illuminated so. The leaves misplac'd in the Binding, but perfect I think. Another copy on vellum, not so well wrote as the former and imperfect in the first book'. Because the Newberry manuscript's initials are not illuminated and because it is 'imperfect in the first book', it is probably noted by the second description of '[a]nother copy'. Not only Martin, but also Thomas Berthelette may have overseen a rebinding of the codex, since the latter had access to deluxe printing capabilities, but this suggestion rests on the assumption that Berthelette had access to Newberry MS 33.5 before he printed his final edition in 1554.

<sup>11</sup> Macaulay, Introduction, 1, p. cli. See the masterful collation for this 'disarranged' section in Pearsall and Mooney, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 275.

<sup>12</sup> The verses on fol. 110<sup>v</sup> under Thomas Goldsmith the Young's name are as follows: 'Now ffrynde now foo now welle and / now woo thys farith the worlde / synne hyt is soo lete com and goo and / take hyt as hyte ys'.

<sup>13</sup> Harris, 'Ownership and Readership', p. 208.

<sup>14</sup> Lynn Arner, *Chaucer, Gower, and the Vernacular Rising: Poetry and the Problem of the Populace after 1381* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2013), especially chapters 1–3.

ownership by one of the many Thomases in this distinguished family that predates the Norman Conquest and owned vast estates between Buckinghamshire and Yorkshire (Figure 6).<sup>15</sup> The family's ownership of this manuscript accords with Harris's study of Lancastrian acquisition of the earliest version of the *Confessio Amantis*. Harris states: 'The "Lancastrian" copies probably attest more firmly to the prevalence of the first recension of the text than they do to a preference amongst their owners for the form of dedication to be found in the second or third versions of the poem, or at least to any degree of ease in the gratification of such an understandable preference'.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps because early *Confessio* manuscripts were more readily available and in this case the first merchant class owners were willing to sell, the Bold family acquired one and hardly minded that someone had removed the most identifiable feature of the earliest texts: the Prologue describing Richard II's commission of the poem. The Bold family, staunch Lancastrian supporters, with John de Bold preserving Caernarfon Castle from Owen Glendower in 1402 and John's son Thomas fighting for Henry V at Agincourt, might have desired a copy of the famous poem eventually dedicated to Henry Derby by a poet self-identifying in the Lancastrian house through his collar of service. The book's rhetorical teachings would have been useful to a family in which there were many sheriffs, John de Bold having served as High Sheriff of Lancaster from 1406 to 1411, beginning a tradition of public service that would be resumed by later generations.<sup>17</sup> Since the role of High Sheriff includes ceremonial as well as legal duties, preparation for public speaking with persuasive emphasis on the cadences of language would be necessary, a preparation that seems to be suggested in the inscription of rhetorical figures in Newberry MS 33.5.<sup>18</sup>

15 See 'Manchester UK: Old Historic Families (1)', *Papillon Graphics' Virtual Encyclopedia and Guide to Greater Manchester*, 13 January 2013, [www.manchester2002-uk.com/history/old-families2.html](http://www.manchester2002-uk.com/history/old-families2.html).

16 Harris, 'Ownership and Readership', p. 121.

17 High Sheriffs of Lancaster in the Bold family are as follows: Richard Bold, 1576; Richard Bold, 1590; Richard Bold, 1631; Peter Bold, 1654; Peter Bold, 1690. See *List of Sheriffs for England and Wales from the Earliest Times to AD 1831*, Public Record Office Lists and Indexes, 9 (London: PRO, 1893).

18 According to Richard Gorski (*The Fourteenth-Century Sheriff: English Local Administration in the Late Middle Ages* [Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003], p. 4), although earlier twentieth-century scholarship stressed the diminution of the sheriff's powers and status during the later Middle Ages, '[e]ven in the mid-fifteenth century the shrievalty was not an office to be ignored'. Gorski's book makes the case that while increasing central bureaucracy may have spread the sheriff's once unilateral powers across several administrators, it is nevertheless true that this bureaucracy linked the sheriff to the crown and that late medieval sheriffs derived mostly from the gentry and were important officials in their district. The high-status role of sheriff was often passed down through the generations in particular families of the gentry, as Gorski shows through the example of Cheyne family in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (p. 128).

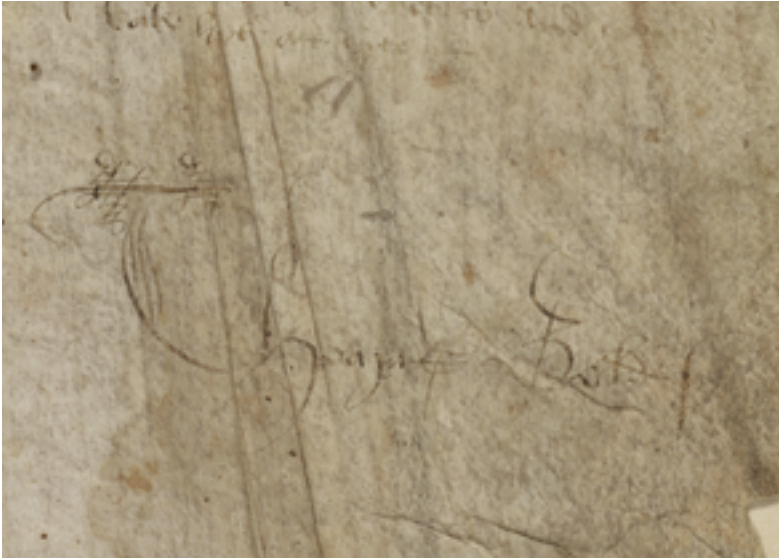


Figure 6. Thomas Bold's signature. Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5, fol. 110<sup>r</sup>. Reproduced by permission of the Newberry Library.

Besides the inducements of political affiliation and requirements for public speaking, respected opinion about the wonderfully imitable quality of Gower's English could have motivated a purchase of a *Confessio Amantis* especially inscribed for rhetorical exercises and emphasizing a particular understanding of rhetoric through the rearrangement of Gower's poem. Throughout the fifteenth century, in the acknowledgments of Hoccleve, the Scottish Chaucerians and others, Gower, as N. W. Gilroy-Scott remarks, developed a reputation 'as an early, if not the first, refiner of the English language'.<sup>19</sup> Gower was often mentioned, along with Lydgate and Chaucer, as a father of English eloquence. For instance, in *The Leuys*

<sup>19</sup> N. W. Gilroy-Scott, 'John Gower's Reputation: Literary Allusions from the Early Fifteenth Century to the Time of *Pericles*', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 1 (1971), 31. Other scholarship on Gower's reputation includes the following: John H. Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), pp. 1–36; Derek Pearsall, 'The Gower Tradition', in *Confessio Amantis: Responses and Reassessments*, ed. by A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 179–97; Rita Copeland, 'Lydgate, Hawes, and the Science of Rhetoric in the Late Middle Ages', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 53.1 (1992), 57–82. Tim William Machan, 'Thomas Berthelette and Gower's *Confessio*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 18 (1996), 143–66; Siân Echard, 'Introduction: Gower's Reputation', in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004); Helen Cooper, 'This worthy olde writer': *Pericles* and other Gowers, 1592–1640', in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 99–113.

of *Seyntys* (1443–47), Osbern Bokenham apologizes for never having dwelled among the three worthies of the English rhetorical tradition and praises the ‘fresh flourys’ in their poetic lines.<sup>20</sup> Gower’s reputation for sweetness of speech might have led to the rhetorical inscription of Newberry MS 33.5 circa 1450 and encouraged the owners, including the Bolds, to employ the text in language instruction.

By the sixteenth century, when Thomas Bold (as well as one John Cok) affixed a signature to the manuscript, references to Gower’s linguistic prowess were standard, and Thomas Berthelette, publisher of the *Confessio Amantis*, would argue that aspiring writers ought to imitate the medieval poet.<sup>21</sup> Stephen Hawes had referred to Gower’s ‘sentencyous dewe’, William Dunbar to his ‘goldyn pennis’, and John Skelton to his ‘garnished [...] Englysshe.’<sup>22</sup> These fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century praises for Gower’s English expression set the stage for a privileging of the *Confessio Amantis* among the medieval poet’s trilingual works — a preference accorded in scholarship even to this day — although many early modern admirers, as we shall see, respected the confluence of Latin and vernacular studies in Gower’s poems. As King’s Printer, Berthelette diverged from his usual practice of publishing religious or legal texts to print a handsome edition of the *Confessio Amantis*, a poem that in his estimation had much to teach the English people about effective linguistic expression. In his Dedication to Henry for both the 1532 and 1554 editions, Berthelette ensures the association between the *Confessio Amantis* and rhetorical models through references to ‘eloquen[ce]’, ‘arguments’, ‘perswa[sion]’, and the ‘garnyss[ing]’ of ‘sentencis’. This ‘garnishing’ consists in choice *repetitiones* of native English expressions. Berthelette likens the *Confessio Amantis* to a domestic space that may be ‘stuffed and founnyshed’, like a room for private reading or tutoring, in persuasive reasoning and ethical exemplars. Significantly, Ciceronian memory training — popular during the Renaissance and recorded in the *De Oratore*, the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* — involves placing *loci* in different rooms of the mind for easy recall;<sup>23</sup>

20 Osbern Bokenham, *The Leuys of Seyntys*, ed. by Simon Horobin (London: EETS, 2020), l. 4055.

21 On Berthelette’s editions of the *Confessio Amantis*, see Machan, ‘Thomas Berthelette’, pp. 143–66 and Siân Echard, *Printing the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 99–101.

22 Stephen Hawes, *The Pastime of Pleasure: A literal reprint of the earliest complete copy (1517), with variant readings from the editions of 1509, 1554, and 1555, together with introduction, notes, glossary, and indexes*, by William Edward Mead, EETS, os no. 173 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), l. 1317; William Dunbar, ‘The Goldyn Targe’, in *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. by James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), l. 268; John Skelton, *Garland of Laurels*, l. 387. See Echard, ‘Introduction’.

23 Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

by likening the *Confessio* to a well-appointed chamber, Berthelette recommends that contemporary writers might easily retrieve linguistic objects from it.

When searching the *Confessio*'s 'rooms', Berthelette proposes, the reader will find that Gower's sentences in 'our vulgar' English spotlight strategic rhetorical choices for informed, compelling, and moral writing. Because, Berthelette continues, Gower composes in 'olde englyss', while many of the publisher's contemporaries borrow words from 'latyne / frenche / and other languages', Gower's *Confessio* presents a welcome template for a mostly unadulterated vernacular put to the service of ethical teachings. In this comment upon the purity and historicity of Gower's English, Berthelette's first edition prefigures and his second edition adds fuel to the Inkhorn Controversy, a rebellion against foreign neologisms that arose in two segments of English society: among patriots desiring to preserve and perpetuate a native language and among Cambridge humanists like Thomas Wilson, John Cheke, and Roger Ascham, who harked back to Ciceronian ideals.<sup>24</sup> The 1532 edition of the *Confessio* anticipated by approximately a decade the rising rejection of new English words built upon foreign roots, while the 1554 edition came out only a year after Thomas Wilson's famous complaint in *The Arte of Rhetorique* against 'talke powdered with ouersea language'.<sup>25</sup> Ironically, the Inkhorn Controversy reacted against another publisher, William Caxton, who disseminated many new foreign-based words in attempts to express ideas not yet encapsulated in the English vernacular; now Berthelette, a more conservative printer, sets out to reverse the trend by using Gower as a standard.<sup>26</sup> Presenting his edition of the *Confessio* to the king, Berthelette certainly approached his contentions concerning Gower's native English with patriotic fervour, yet the publisher could also appeal to his monarch's scholarly abilities by declaring that pure English lends perspicuity to moral writing. Both Cicero and Quintilian made a similar argument concerning *Latinitas* — that Attic diction best serves rhetorical ends.<sup>27</sup>

24 Richard Foster Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language: A Survey of Opinions Concerning the Vernacular from the Introduction of Printing to the Restoration* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1953), pp. 68–141.

25 Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, ed. by G. H. Mair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 165.

26 Alvin Vos, 'Humanistic Standards of Diction in the Inkhorn Controversy', *Studies in Philology*, 73.4 (October 1976), 376.

27 Cicero, *Brutus-Orator*, ed. by G. L. Hendrickson and trans. by H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 251; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, VIII.1.2–3.

In sum, Berthelette proposes that if ‘any man’ wishes to write well in English, he need only follow Gower’s ‘lantern’ light.<sup>28</sup> Considering the image of the lantern, held aloft to guide aspiring vernacular writers, Siân Echard remarks that despite his publication of the Latin portions of the *Confessio Amantis*, Berthelette intended to emphasize Gower’s Englishness — and English language.<sup>29</sup> From the late medieval admirers of Gower through Berthelette’s praise of Gower’s language, the *Confessio Amantis* became known as a repository of rhetorical teaching, and Newberry MS 33.5 seems to have been inscribed specifically in order to highlight that teaching. As the fifteenth century gave way to the age of print, and Berthelette commended Gower’s English in order to garner Henry VIII’s approval and increase sales of his *Confessio* editions, Newberry MS 33.5 remained relevant reading as an illustration of Gower’s exemplary speech. Perhaps because of or at least in tandem with Berthelette’s characterization of Gower’s *Confessio* as a repository of pure native English, in 1543 Henry VIII issued the ‘Act for the Advancement of True Religion and for the Abolishment of the Contrary’ in which he prohibits the destruction of Gower’s books and ensures that manuscripts such as Newberry MS 33.5 would survive to teach Gower’s rhetoric to another generation.<sup>30</sup>

Berthelette was also — as were many of his contemporaries — interested in Gower’s ‘science’, and widespread public interest in the *Confessio Amantis* for its learning might have inspired the rearrangement of Newberry MS 33.5 as a certain kind of textbook. A Gower manuscript might not be destroyed, but it could be unbound, reorganized, and manipulated for educational purposes. In his dedication to Henry VIII, Berthelette assures his monarch that the poem conveys not only models for rhetorical argumentation, moral teachings, and imitable expressions, but also extensive knowledge of authors, texts, and histories.<sup>31</sup> In Berthelette’s dedication, Henry VIII is an ‘excellently well lerned’ monarch who alone could provide an authoritative sanction to a text covering so many authorities. As Tim William Machan has commented, Berthelette’s Dedication to Henry VIII makes the *Confessio Amantis* a repository of learning, stamped with the king’s approval and intended for the betterment of the English people, especially those who would take up the pen to imitate Gower’s rhetoric, reproduce his knowledge, and thus increase the glory of the national literature.<sup>32</sup> At Henry’s command in the ‘Act for the Advancement

28 Thomas Berthelette, Dedication to Henry VIII in *Jo. Gower de Confessione Amantis*, ed. by Thomas Berthelette, ESTC system no. 006178413/ ESTC citation no. S106702 (London: Berthelette, 1532).

29 Echard, *Printing the Middle Ages*, p. 101.

30 See C. F. E. Spurgeon, ed., *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion, 1357–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), pp. 84–85.

31 Berthelette, ed., *Jo. Gower de Confessione Amantis*.

32 Machan, ‘Thomas Berthelette’, pp. 147–48.



of True Religion and for the Abolishment of the Contrary' 'Gower's books' — and most prominently the *Confessio Amantis* — came to represent the great achievements of England's past that might be burnished, built upon, and glorified in a reformed, Henrician Albion.<sup>33</sup> One reader of Newberry MS 33.5, possibly a teacher engaged in training a pupil to participate in such a national literary project, focused on the *Confessio's* most erudite passages and rearranged them in order to reflect a new understanding of the liberal arts. As Stephen G. Nichols explains, such alterations to manuscripts occurred frequently and reflect a common perspective that older texts can be brought in line with current viewpoints.<sup>34</sup>

Although defective, Newberry MS 33.5 would have made a fine teaching tool for linguistic and rhetorical studies. It is a large and legible book, 14 x 11 inches, written in double columns of sixty-four lines in a 'textualis' script that Macaulay praises as a 'small, fairly clear hand'.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, the ordination of the manuscript supplies aid to the reader — a teacher or pupil searching for lessons — by way of *incipits* and *explicit*s, headers stating the proper book of the poem, and speaker markers indicating dialogue between Amans and Genius. As Harris has noticed, often readers of the manuscript assist in directing and teaching others who might come after them; titles for the tales are added in both Latin and English, and in many cases the marginalia directs the eyes to a 'narratio bona'.<sup>36</sup> The text, identified as the first version of the poem by its colophon ('*Confessio Amantis* specialiter intitatur') includes the original Prologue with the *Explicit* (4 lines), 'Quam cinxere', and 'Quia vnusquisque'; these Latin poems in addition to the *Confessio's* glosses and verses could have supported ample instruction in Latin, while the Middle English verses might have supplied models for vernacular composition and declamation. Since in Newberry MS 33.5, the Latin glosses and verses are included in the double columns, with the Middle English sometimes interrupted by them, the format provides many a challenge in the code switching expected of a renaissance humanist. Code switching in Newberry MS 33.5 happens at both the linguistic and orthographic levels, since the scribe transitions to abbreviations when spelling out the Latin. The glosses are underlined in red ink and sometimes separated from the Middle English by a slightly larger colour capital in red and blue; where there is only a gloss and not also a Latin poem, no large capital divides the Middle English from the

33 Spurgeon, ed., 'Chaucer Criticism and Allusion', pp. 84–85.

34 Stephen G. Nichols, 'What is a Manuscript Culture?: Technologies of the Manuscript Matrix', in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, ed. by Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 38.

35 Macaulay, Introduction, 'The Complete Works of John Gower' Pearsall and Mooney (A *Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 275) identify the script as 'textualis'.

36 Harris, 'Ownership and Readership', pp. 220, 228.

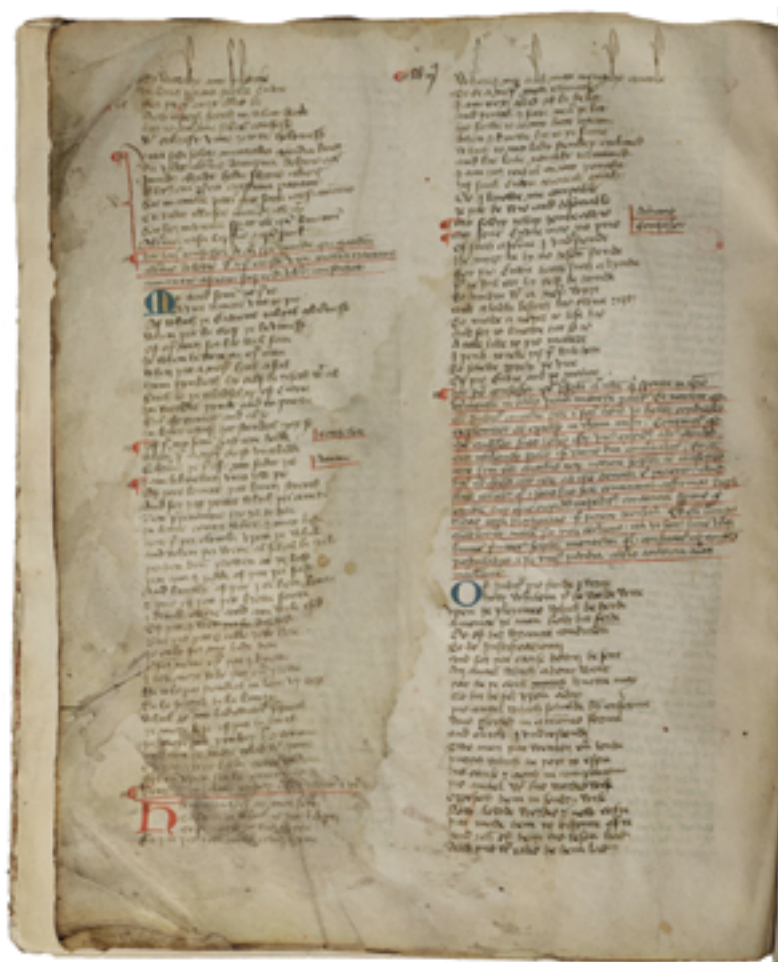


Figure 7. Continuous Latin / Middle English text. Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>. Reproduced by permission of the Newberry Library.

Latin (Figure 7). The Latin poetry is set off from the Middle English poem only by brackets in either red or brown ink or in a double line of both. The impression is of a continuous, dual language text with signposts sometimes encouraging the English reader to stop, translate, and ponder. Mostly undecorated, with the exception of the scattered red and blue capitals just mentioned and those marking important beginnings, Newberry MS 33.5 offers itself for reading and serious study.

Even more important than the helpful construction and layout, the inscription of the manuscript encourages the study of rhetoric by

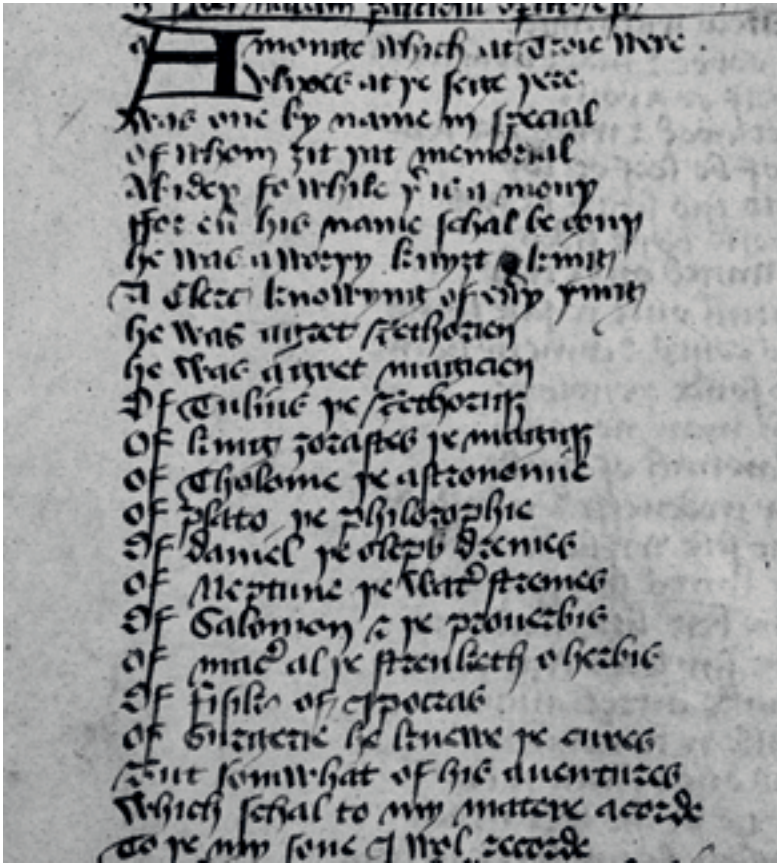


Figure 8. Anaphora (of Tullius, etc.). Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5, fol. 74r. Reproduced by permission of the Newberry Library.

emphasizing reiterative figures of speech such as anaphora. Through the repetitive force of anaphora Gower returns his reader to the voice of the speaker — whether the speech arises from biblical ‘John’, the wise Virgin, Genius the confessor, or a passionate female character taking her last few breaths — and he drives their thoughts and his own moral messages home. The scribe of Newberry MS 33.5 ensures that anaphora is noticed and imitated; in Books 6 and 7 there are many passages defining rhetoric or discussing famous rhetoricians in which anaphora is emphasized by the pen stroke. For instance, on folio 74r (amidst Book 6), the bodies of knowledge known by the great necromancer and speaker Ulysses are listed in such a way as to underscore the wanderer’s many gifts. There, Genius claims that Ulysses knew ‘of Tullius the Rethorique / of King Zorastes the magique /

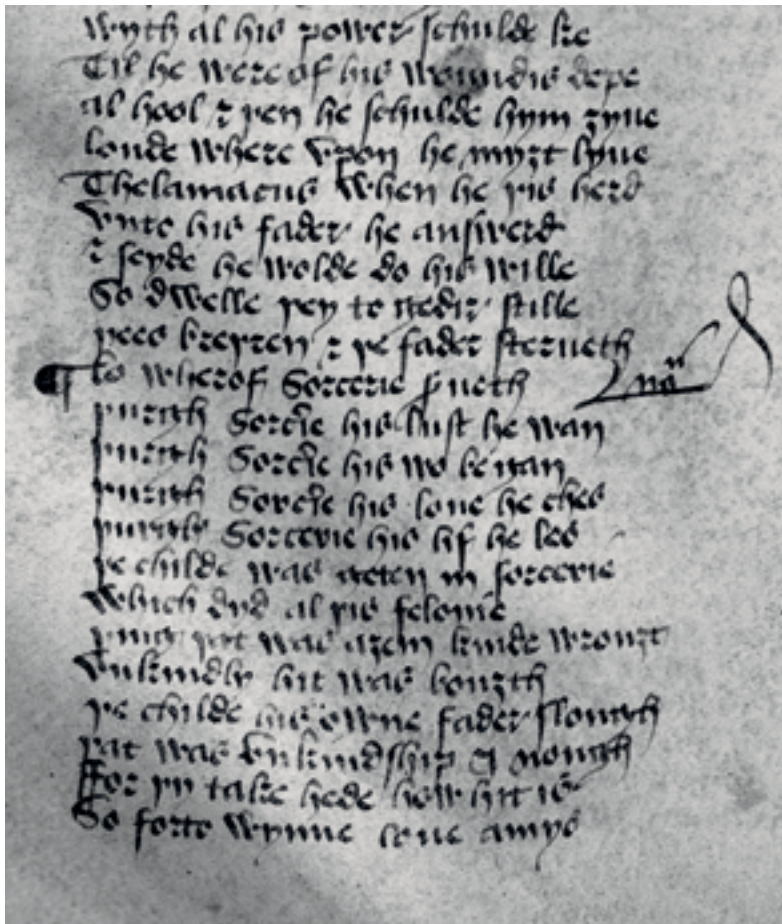


Figure 9. Anaphora (thurgh sorcerie). Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5, fol. 75<sup>v</sup>. Reproduced by permission of the Newberry Library.

of Tholome the astronomie, / of Plato the philosophie, and more (Figure 8). On the manuscript page the list of famous thinkers slides away from the repeated preposition ‘of’ and therefore, whether intentionally or not, contributes to Genius’s argument that Ulysses possessed so much learning but drifted away from any moral purpose in applying it.<sup>37</sup> At the end of the

37 Claire Fanger, ‘Magic and Metaphysics of Gender in Gower’s “Tale of Circe and Ulysses”’, in *Re-visioning Gower*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Charlotte, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998), pp. 203–19. Fanger argues that Ulysses values learning for its own sake, not for the personal and social good that it might bring.

same tale, that of ‘Ulysses and Telegonus’, Gower underscores the evils of necromancy and, with anaphora, the moral lesson that has been wrought in Ulysses’ life: ‘Thurgh sorcerie his lust he wan / Thurgh sorcerie his wo began / Thurgh sorcerie his love he ches / Thurgh sorcerie his lif he les’. Leaving more space between all the repeated elements — Thurgh / sorcerie / his — the Newberry scribe highlights Gower’s complex lesson on a rhetorician whose speech wove destructive spells rather than peace (Figure 9). Ulysses may have gained Troy for the Greeks and his desires from Circe through persuasive charms, but the same spell that enamoured Circe engendered Telegonus, the son who would unwittingly slay his father. At the beginning of the *Confessio*’s lecture on ‘Rethorique’ (86<sup>r</sup>), the Newberry scribe continues to highlight repeated phrases associating the discipline with magic, an association that (as we have seen in Chapter One) links persuasive speech to the power in stars, herbs, and stones and ultimately to the divine Word that will ennoble speech practices seen to be sullied by Ulysses’ use. As I write in ‘John Gower’s Magical Rhetoric’, it is only through an emphasis on the Word that Gower recuperates a rhetoric involving mystical language.<sup>38</sup> When Genius is intoning, ‘With word the wild beast is daunted / With word the serpent is enchanted’, the Newberry scribe once again augments the space between the preposition and its object to dwell upon the anaphora and the force of the mighty Word. Even the *ductus* of the repeated phrases is different from the rest of the line: the ink is noticeably thicker where reiteration occurs (Figure 10).<sup>39</sup> Launching a definition of the discipline of rhetoric, Gower notes the magical properties of words and then continues to develop examples by which linguistic transformation can be a force for public good, rather than merely for personal gratification.

In addition to highlighting Gower’s sermons against rhetoric’s perversion in sorcery and the possibility for benign incantations involving the Word, the visible markers of added space and thick ink surrounding anaphora function as the speaker markers do for the dialogues between Genius and Amans: they are cues to ways that the verbal drama of the *Confessio Amantis* might unfold, for either a private reader imagining the cadences of the language and the exchanges between characters or a tutorial situation including declamation of the poem’s rhetorical speeches. Martin Camargo and Marjorie Curry Woods have drawn attention to medieval classroom performances of classical and epistolary texts; the techniques for delivery taught through textbooks and pedagogical conventions could easily be applied to household tutorials in which a manuscript such as Newberry MS 33.5 provided declamation exercises for

38 Georgiana Donavin, ‘John Gower’s Magical Rhetoric’, *Accessus*, 6.2 (2021), <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1059&context=accessus>>.

39 I would like to thank Christopher Baswell for this insight.



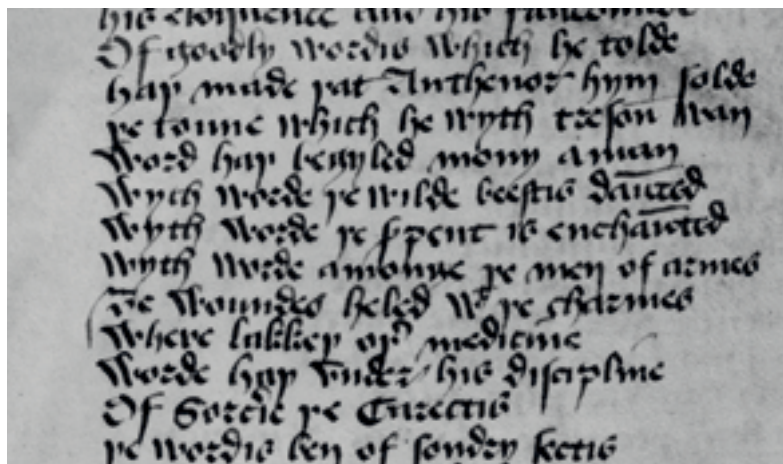


Figure 10. 'Wyth worde' and scribal ductus. Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5, fol. 86<sup>v</sup>. Reproduced by permission of the Newberry Library.

the young student.<sup>40</sup> When the exaggerated inscription for anaphora was read by renaissance owners of the manuscript, it could have dovetailed with innovations in reading practices encouraged by Philip Melanchthon's *Institutiones Rhetoricae* and other works such as Leonard Cox's *The Arte or Crafte of Rhethoryke*, the first rhetoric textbook in English to be printed (1530).<sup>41</sup> These books of classroom theory and instruction move from teaching figures of speech as cures for barbarism or keys to interpreting discrete passages to a method for understanding whole texts. As we shall see, one reader of Newberry MS 33. 5 was so impressed with the argument against the rhetoric of evil sorcery, underscored by the special inscription of anaphora, that the order of Books 6 and 7 was reshuffled partially in order to draw a more cohesive connection in the *Confessio Amantis* among

40 Martin Camargo, 'Medieval Rhetoric Delivers; or, Where Chaucer Learned How to Act', *New Medieval Literatures*, 9 (2007), 41–62; Martin Camargo, 'Special Delivery: Were Medieval Letter Writers Trained in Performance?' in *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 173–89; Marjorie Curry Woods, 'Performing Dido' in *Public Declamations: Essays on Medieval Rhetoric, Education, and Letters in Honour of Martin Camargo*, ed. by Georgiana Donavin and Denise Stodola (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 253–65; Marjorie Curry Woods, *Weeping for Dido: The Teaching of Classical Texts in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

41 William P. Weaver, 'Triplex et Copia: Philip Melanchthon's Invention of the Rhetorical Figures', *Rhetorica*, 29.4 (Autumn 2011), 378, 394. On Cox, see Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500–1700* (1956, repr. New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), pp. 90–95.

magic, rhetoric, and public speech — and the figures of repetition underlining these elements.

In Newberry MS 33.5, both merchant class and noble youths had opportunities to follow inscriptions of anaphora to superior public speaking and also to engage in sophisticated conversations about the liberal arts and especially rhetorical theory. In its rearrangement of Books 6 and 7, Newberry MS 33.5 points to a particular understanding of the discipline, emphasizing rhetoric's mission to counteract deceptive, erroneous, and empty speech — especially when such speech infractions occur in the political realm — with ethically and morally sound discourse. This interpretation of rhetoric's mission is consonant with the lessons advocated by the passages containing anaphora that we have already noted. As suggested earlier, the special inscription of anaphora might have encouraged a cohesive reading of the *Confessio Amantis* in which the liberal arts, and especially the proper uses of rhetoric, counteract the dangers of black magical knowledge and speech. In other words, in Newberry MS 33.5 repetition, figured by anaphora, is an effective vehicle for both conveying sophisticated teachings about rhetoric and producing compelling speech.

To summarize the rearrangement of Newberry MS 33.5, the reorganization of Books 6 and 7 both connects rhetoric to magic through teachings on heavenly bodies and distinguishes the art of speech from necromancy through political *exempla* and theological references. In this way, rhetoric becomes an antidote to deceitful incantations involving the stars and a precursor to understanding one's place in the cosmos; it is the culmination of political studies involving both biblical and post-biblical rulers and the foundation for a wise king who evinces all five categories of noble pragmatics: truth, largesse, justice, pity, and chastity. The rearrangement of the rhetoric section in Newberry MS 33.5 insists on the primacy of the *Confessio's* political themes as noticed by George Coffman, developed by Russell Peck, and investigated by many others, at the same time that it declares rhetoric an umbrella for all of the arts and sciences and lays upon it heavy moral obligations.<sup>42</sup> A tutor or reader interested in the power and morality of language studies acted on what he or she understood as the *Confessio's* potential to teach rhetoric and reshuffled the pages in the following ways.

In Fairfax MS 3 and other manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis*, Book 7 distinctly interrupts the lover's confession with Genius's lecture on the

42 George R. Coffman, 'John Gower in His Most Significant Role,' in *Elizabethan Studies and Other Essays in Honor of George F. Reynolds*, ed. by E. J. West, University of Colorado Studies, Series B, Studies in the Humanities, 2.4 (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1945), pp. 52–61; George R. Coffman, 'John Gower, Mentor for Royalty: Richard II,' *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 69 (1954), 953–64; Russell A. Peck, *Kingship and Common Profit in Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Carbondale: S. Illinois University Press, 1978).

seven arts, divided into the classifications of theory, rhetoric, and practice. In the Newberry *Confessio*, however, Book 6 with its concentration on the sin of gluttony is abbreviated in order to transition more smoothly into the Aristotelian presentation of the arts: many tales in Book 6 on love drunkenness that supply *exempla* for the lover's confession in other texts are either lost or shoved to the end of the next book. This truncated Book 6 serves as an introduction to Book 7 and frames the discussion of the liberal arts with references to deceitfulness and magic. A collapsed Book 6 begins with an introduction appealing to those who might delight in the youthful behaviour of drinking, dancing, and dalliance (behaviour that ends in deceit), proceeds to establish magic as a deceiver that uses not liquor but verbal and material charms, and concludes in a characterization of the magician as the perverted master of the liberal arts. Of course, literary interpretation can connect these elements in any version of the *Confessio Amantis*, but the links among deceitfulness, magic, and the liberal arts are tighter in Newberry MS 33.5, and Gower's characterization of the perversely artful magician seems sharper:

Of hem that ben magiciens,  
 Riht so of the naturiens  
 Upon the sterres from above  
 His weie he secheth unto love [...].  
 He makth ymage, he makth sculpture,  
 He makth writinge, he makth figure,  
 He makth his calculacions,  
 He makth his demonstracions;  
 His houres of astronomie  
 He kepeth [...].<sup>43</sup>

With an abbreviated and narrowly focused Book 6, Book 7 is set up more clearly to reverse the magician's distortion of the arts and to explain how *repetitiones*, often a feature of incantations, can be reclaimed for ethical speech arts. In the passage above, Gower summons the necromancer with the initial masculine pronoun, only to subjugate him later to those who engage in moral discourse.

To accentuate the juxtaposition of necromancy and rhetoric, Book 7 in Newberry MS 33.5 draws a clearer contrast between the magician and philosopher. It does so by diverging from other *Confessio* 7 texts, which begin with an exchange between Amans and Genius on Aristotle's lore and proceed to a complete treatment of the liberal arts, divided under the headings of Theory, Rhetoric, and Practice: the *quadrivium* under Theory, the *trivium* under Rhetoric, and policies for governance and noble

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<sup>43</sup> CA 6, ll. 1337–48.



behaviour under Practice. Rather than opening with the framing dialogue by Amans and Genius and a thorough discussion of the *quadrivium*, Newberry MS 33.5's Book 7 enters directly into a description of the zodiac from the quadrivial art of astronomy, making a fine transition from the end of Book 6, where necromancers like Nectanabus effect magic according to the stars. The Newberry manuscript's Book 7 follows this concentration on heavenly bodies with a presentation of their sway on earth by moving forward several tales from the section on Practice as an additional part of the prologue to the rhetoric section. (See the table below for the order of Newberry MS 33.5's Book 7.) As for Genius's remaining lecture on theology, physics, and mathematics, in the Newberry manuscript it is moved to the end of Book 7, suggesting that (at least to one reader) knowledge of heavenly bodies is the beginning of the other sciences. Scribal innovations to the section on rhetoric allow it to encompass theology, and if these innovations did not prompt the manuscript's reorganization, they at the very least support it by better connecting rhetoric to quadrivial studies on the heavens.

The first significant variant that connects rhetoric and theology, occurring in the opening section of Genius's lecture on rhetoric, calls attention to humankind's place in the cosmic hierarchy and responsibility to rule righteously with the gift of speech:

Aboue alle erþly creatures  
þe hyȝh maker of natures  
þe worlde to mon haȝ ȝyuen alone      [‘worlde’ for ‘word’, ‘given’ for ‘gove’]  
So þat þe speech of his perþone  
Or forto leȝe or forto wynne  
þe hertis þouȝt which is wiȝ inne  
may schewe what hit wolde mene  
and þat is nowhere ellis sene  
of kinde with none oþer beest  
So schulde he be þe more honest  
To whom god ȝaf so gret a ȝift [...].<sup>44</sup>

Leaving aside the adjustment of the past participle ‘given’ to reflect a standard usage in London dialect, we see that in the third line the scribe has replaced ‘word’ (common in Fairfax 3 and elsewhere) with ‘worlde’,

<sup>44</sup> All passages presented from the rhetoric section of Newberry MS 33.5 are from my own transcriptions. For a comprehension list of variants, see Macaulay's textual notes on CA's rhetoric section.

and in so doing adjusted the causal analysis in the passage. While Fairfax 3 and other manuscripts advance only one reason for humanity to use speech honestly — God's having given it — Newberry MS 33.5 insists on an additional and in the order of the verse a more primary reason — God's having given humanity the world. This gift of the world calls upon humankind's stewardship and management of the creation through the 'honest' exercise of speech. Since God invested 'none other beast' with language, it is the people's charge to express themselves in a way that both accords with and maintains the cosmic hierarchy. Through speech, all human beings must rule their own worlds: an idea common enough in Gower, but in Newberry MS 33.5 new in this passage. With its substitution of 'worlde' for 'word', the rhetoric section in Newberry MS 33.5 follows well from the many tales of rulers, power, and good counsel that were brought forward from the final section of Book 7 to function as an additional part of the introduction to 'Rethorique'. The substitution of 'worlde' for 'word' reinforces the lesson of many of these *exempla* that more power and possession in the 'worlde' calls for truthful and ethical exercise of the 'word'.

When, a few lines later, Genius delineates the discipline of rhetoric, another set of variants subtly moves from the opening's discussion of cosmic hierarchies to theology. In Newberry MS 33.5, Genius defines rhetoric as follows:

Is Rethorique þe science  
 appropred to þe reverence  
 Of wordes þat be reſonable  
 and for þis art ſchall be vaillible  
 wyth godely worde forto like

[‘godely’'s spelling indicates either ‘goodly’ or ‘Godly’, and ‘worde’ is singular, rather than plural as in other manuscripts]

hit haþ Gramaire hit haþ logique  
 þat ſeruen boþe vnto þe ſpeech [...].

According to Genius, rhetoric is the science that promotes reasonable words, and with both grammar and logic serving this purpose, rhetoric benefits all with a goodly word / Godly Word. In effect, rhetoric serves the common good through ethical speech and the deployment of the divine Word. Discussing ambiguous spellings such as ‘godely’, Russell Peck explains that Gower's Kentish dialect did not double vowels for

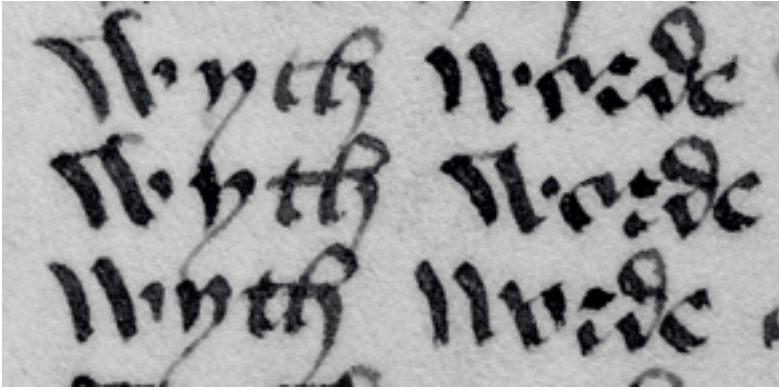


Figure 11. W, lower and upper case. Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5, fol. 86<sup>v</sup>. Reproduced by permission of the Newberry Library.

length, making it difficult to distinguish ‘goodly’ from ‘Godly’.<sup>45</sup> Here, the multivalence of the spelling seems purposeful on the scribe’s part, when ‘godely’ is paired with ‘worde’ in the singular, not in the plural as in other manuscripts. Add to these features the indistinguishability between upper and lower case ‘w’ throughout Newberry MS 33.5, but especially in this portion, and the ambiguity between the words inventing speech and the Word of creation suggests a theological allusion (Figure 11). The theological possibility is especially interesting given the later reorganization of Books 6 and 7 that removed theology from the discussion leading up to Genius’s lecture on rhetoric. The influence of the ‘Godly Word’ in Newberry MS 33.5’s rhetoric section implies that speech and divinity studies go hand in hand — and should not be considered separate discourses belonging to the liberal arts. Having moved from magicians to the stars to political scenes for public speech, Newberry MS 33.5 implies that true rhetoricians are the anti-necromancers, speakers who combine a look to the heavens with a high regard for the public good.

If a focus on the ‘Godly Word’ embeds a concern of Theorique’s first discipline, theology, into the discussion of ‘Rhetorique’, a final variant makes the integration of theory and rhetoric clear. In Newberry MS 33.5 ‘rhetorique’ is dubbed a ‘theorique’:

But ȝit þe bokis tellen þis  
þat worde aboue al erþly þingis

<sup>45</sup> Russell A. Peck, Introduction, in *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Russell A. Peck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. xxxv–xxxvi.

Is Virtuous in his doingis  
 wheþer so hit be to euel or good                    [‘whether’ for ‘where’]  
 ffor ȝif þe wordis semen good  
 and be wele ʃpokien at monnes eere                    [‘be’ for ‘ben’]  
 when þat þer is no troupe þere  
 þei done ful oft gret deceit  
 ffor when þe worde to þe conceipt  
 diʃcordeth in so double a wife  
 Such Theorique is to deʃpiʃe                    [‘Theorique’ for ‘Rethorique’]  
 In every place & forto drede [...].

This passage begins by declaring the power, or *virtus*, of words much greater than ‘al erthly thingis’; both the preceding Latin verses and the passage directly following the above definition identify gems and herbs as the ‘thingis’ for special comparison.<sup>46</sup> As Tamara O’Callaghan notes, although no one has identified in what form Gower received hermetic literature, treatises associated with Hermes Trismegistus, extant now only in fragments, explain the interactions between plants, stones, and stars: how herbal charms and stones engraved with patterns connected to the decans accrue power through association with the heavenly bodies or the zodiac.<sup>47</sup> Words are associated with mystic stones and plants, as we have seen in Chapter One, because all three were believed to be invested with supernatural powers and were thus invoked in incantations and prayers. Although words are not physical like stones and plants, speech has the capacity to create new worlds, just as gems contribute to new creations in art and architecture, and plants mix with other substances to yield food, paint, ink, and more. In such associations emphasizing the productive capacities of words, gems, and herbs, we can see the scribe’s motivation to associate the Word of creation with the rhetorical word of poetic makers. However, the morality of any human’s verbal creation is conditional, warn two small variants, ‘whether’ and ‘be’ in the subjunctive.

The passage proceeds to argue that words can be efficacious whether spoken with good or evil intent and that a ‘gret deceit’ occurs when

<sup>46</sup> CA 7, l. 1545.

<sup>47</sup> Tamara O’Callaghan, ‘The Fifteen Stars, Stones, and Herbs: Book VII of the *Confessio Amantis* and its Afterlife’, in *John Gower: Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation and Tradition*, ed. by Elisabeth Dutton, with John Hines and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), p. 140. Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science During the first Thirteen Centuries of Our Era*, 8 vols, 2nd edn. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923; rpt. 1929), 1, pp. 287–92. See also Jim Tester, *A History of Western Astrology* (Suffolk: Boydell, 1990), pp. 24, 62–63.

honeyed but dishonest words are well-delivered to an unsuspecting listener. When word and thought are discordant and when their polished delivery seems to resolve the discord, this duplicitous rhetoric is a ‘Theorique [...] to despise’. Here, as with the inclusion of theology in the Newberry manuscript’s definition of rhetoric, the realm of ‘Theorique’, or the *quadrivium*, overlaps teachings on speech and discourse invention. With this manuscript’s designation of rhetoric (even evil rhetoric) as a ‘Theorique’, the discipline becomes not only the overarching field of the *trivium* encompassing grammar and logic, but also an equal of other fields in the *quadrivium* that provide the first principles for all knowledge, fields that were later removed from Newberry MS 33.5’s lecture on the liberal arts and compiled in a heap at the end of Book 7. Both the scribal variant of ‘theory’ for ‘rhetoric’ and the later reordering of Books 6 and 7 seem to argue that ‘Theorique’ is best understood through examining choices made in the political realm, determinations about how to apply astronomical knowledge or expertise in speech. Since the reorganized Newberry MS 33.5 directly juxtaposes Nectanabus’s manipulative astrology with Ptolemy’s wisdom on planets and stars, Ulysses’ verbal trickery with earnest arguments in the Roman Senate, the manuscript starkly presents both wicked and honest choices and almost always follows the former with a curative narrative of the latter.

In addition to the contrast between a divinized rhetoric and magic, another important way in which the order of Newberry’s Book 7 diverges from others is that many tales on truthful counsel and just rulership from the book’s section on Practice are moved forward to provide part of the introduction to rhetoric. This reorganization makes the rhetoric section’s defence of plain speech in public discourse a capstone theory for the examples in the tales. These relocated tales span five folios (80<sup>r</sup>–85<sup>v</sup>), and I will discuss only a representative sampling of them here. They include, for instance, the debate between the philosopher Diogenes and the flatterer Aristippus, whom Genius compares to contemporary counsellors: ‘flaterie passeth alle / In chambre’, the priest remarks.<sup>48</sup> If a prince were to rule well, Genius continues, he must take counsel where ‘the pleine trouthe is noted, / Ther may a prince wel conceive / That he schal noght himself deceive [...]’.<sup>49</sup> In ‘The Emperour and the Masons’, Julius Caesar represents just that sort of ruler who welcomes ‘the pleine trouthe’, one whom ‘the kinde flatour can noght love [...]’.<sup>50</sup> Anytime Caesar puffs with pride, the masons arrive to discuss his tomb. Whereas in the rhetoric lecture Genius accuses Caesar of inappropriately adorning his speech against executing the Catilinarian rebels, as we saw in Chapter One, this introduction makes

48 CA 7, ll. 2324–25.

49 CA 7, ll. 2340–42.

50 CA 7, ll. 2491.

clear that the rhetorical follies of Caesar's senate speeches during the time of the Republic were replaced by a sober respect for plainly stated advice. Genius praises Caesar before criticizing his performance in an earlier political context to show that it is possible for everyone to learn from honest and straightforward rhetoric of Cicero. From here follows a series of tales on Justice, the third category of Policy, a subset of Practice.<sup>51</sup> 'The Tale of Lycurgus', for instance, heralds a discussion of lawgivers who have provided the foundation for any articulations of judgement, and finally, immediately before the rhetoric section, Genius discourses on pity, the fourth element of 'Practique', that tempers legal pronouncements.

To recap, Newberry's reorganization of the *Confessio's* teachings on the liberal arts proceeds from the verbal deceit of magicians, to the astronomy informing their distorted invocations of God's heaven, to warnings about corrupt public speech and exemplary characters who heed those warnings, to discussions of justice and mercy that should underpin a ruler's legal rhetoric. From here, the section on rhetoric opens with Latin introductions in both poetry and prose leading to Genius's Middle English invocation of humankind's responsibility to use God's verbal gift ethically and morally. Although the variations in inscription emphasize the theological and pragmatic elements of rhetoric, and although the reordering of Books 6 and 7 interlocks the discipline more tightly with governance and contrasts it with magic, the rhetoric section in Newberry MS 33.5 is substantially similar to what has already been discussed in Chapter One from editions taking Fairfax 3 as the base text: Genius asserts that the power of words overmatches even gems and herbs, characterizes rhetoric as the science relying on grammar and logic to infuse words with reason, and offers exempla from the life of Ulysses and the Catilinarian debates to illustrate the efficacy of speech.

Both despite and because of the ravages of time, Newberry MS 33.5 is a monument to late medieval and renaissance approaches to rhetoric. Despite its mouldy appearance, it preserves an exaggerated inscription of anaphora, demonstrating the sort of repetition that is emphatic and useful in public speech. Because of the 'defect' in the order of Books 6 and 7, it presents rhetoric as an antidote to deceitful magic, a principle guiding ethical policy, and a centripetal force drawing together many of the liberal arts. Between the manuscript's inscription *circa* 1450 and the seventeenth century, Newberry MS 33.5 was acquired, read, and probably taught as a prompt for rhetorical exercises and a text emphasizing the primacy of language studies. The *Confessio Amantis* was highly regarded as a model for these studies, partly because so many authors commended Gower's golden tongue and even Henry VIII and Thomas Berthelette, the king's

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<sup>51</sup> CA 7, ll. 5040–42.

printer, determined to preserve and disseminate a text so representative of England's great past. For the many authors who lauded Gower, and for Henry VIII and Berthelette, preservation was essential because of what the *Confessio* had to teach: an unadulterated native English and the best that was known and said in medieval England.

By the late seventeenth century, however, the rhetoric of Newberry MS 33.5 belonged more to the codex itself than to the content inside. The matter of Newberry MS 33.5 became less known, especially since the *Confessio Amantis* had not been printed for over a hundred years, but the codex itself continued to materialize the greatness of English history, as well as its owners' wealth, sophistication, and importance in safeguarding a glorious past.<sup>52</sup> From the late seventeenth century onward, Newberry MS 33.5 stood as one more spine in a series of vast libraries meant to conserve historical books, a kind of textual anonymity that, along with the codex's damage, hid its importance to the history of rhetoric. These libraries were heirs to late medieval and renaissance efforts by those such as Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, John Bale, and Matthew Parker to contain and conserve English history. According to Jennifer Summit, such collectors 'reconceived the library's shape and purpose by redefining it from an ecclesiastical receptacle of written tradition to a state-sponsored centre of national identity'.<sup>53</sup> The nationalistic libraries of Newberry MS 33.5's late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century owners, possibly Peter Le Neve, Norroy King of Arms and President of the Society of Antiquaries, and Thomas Martin of Palgrave, whose signature we have seen on the first flyleaf, archived Newberry MS 33.5 among thousands of other documents, many focusing on English heraldry and Norfolk history.<sup>54</sup> Le Neve, who

52 Tim William Machan argues that Berthelette's formatting and reputation underscored the idea of the *Confessio Amantis* as an old-fashioned, conservative text. See Machan, 'Thomas Berthelette', pp. 143–66.

53 Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 12.

54 On Thomas Martin's life (and his relationship with Peter Le Neve), see Martin's own recollections and Sir John Collum's memoir, respectively, in *History of Thetford*, ed. by R. Gough (London: J. Nichols, 1779), pp. 284–85 and xi–xviii. At Le Neve's death in 1729 Martin helped Frances Le Neve catalogue the vast collection that focused on Norfolk history, but also included many valuable medieval codices. Eventually, Martin married Frances and inherited much of the collection by default, though Le Neve had intended the Norfolk papers to be made available to the public. On the unseemly side of Martin's inheritance, see Stoker, 'The Ill-Gotten Library'. Until 1700, Le Neve had owned the richly illustrated Morgan MS M 26, and after its sale retained a nondescript manuscript of the *Confessio* in his possession until he died. On books listed at Le Neve's estate sale, see *A Catalogue of the Valuable Library Collected by that Truly Laborious Antiquary Peter Le Neve, Esq; Norroy King of Arms (Lately Deceased)*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Mus.Bibl.III. 8°.10; our manuscript is most likely book of sale #461, and Martin most probably inherited the codex when it did not sell. See Martin's list of his own manuscript holdings, the *Catalogus Manuscriptorum* (NNAS C3/2/11/1), where it is apparent that Martin owned

collected *Confessio* manuscripts, and his protégé, Martin, who probably inherited the book upon marrying his mentor's widow Frances, patriotically continued traditions of book acquisition and library construction begun around the time of the Newberry manuscript's inscription. After Martin's death, Newberry MS 33.5 fell into various hands and was eventually brought to Castle Howard to magnify the Earl of Carlisle's estate and possibly the Howards' marital connection to a northern branch of Gowers. What had once been a source of learning about English rhetoric became a talisman for a noble family and in the twentieth century with Louis Silver's purchase, a luxury item reflecting the success of a burgeoning American hospitality industry and a fascination with the history of America's most important political and military ally. Because affluence in both the Howard and Silver families tended toward book collection and preservation, scholars became aware of Newberry MS 33.5's existence. G. C. Macaulay was able to check the manuscript variants while preparing his edition of the *Confessio*, and we are able to view Newberry MS 33.5 in Chicago today, a treasure house for the rhetoric of English past.

### Latinity and Repetition in Ben Jonson's *English Grammar*

Newberry MS 33.5 offers possibilities for rhetoric instruction in Latin through the presentation of the poem's head verses and glosses, but even so it is the Middle English anaphora that is given space and specially

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at least two codices of the *Confessio Amantis*, one well-illustrated, another plain. At entry 418. 1.13, Martin notes a copy of the *Confessio Amantis* 'on vellum, not so well wrote as the [illustrated copy] and imperfect in the first book': this book is probably the Newberry manuscript. That Martin kept a book that was probably Newberry MS 33.5 until his death is indicated from the appraisal of books for the estate. See 'Mr Whittingham's Appraisement of Mr Tho. Martin's Library', (NNAS C3/2/11/4) in which Whittingham records a 'Gower' still in Martin's rooms, although much of Martin's library had already been sold because of indigence. Since the illustrated copy would have been easier to sell, the copy left is most probably the Newberry copy. According to *Bibliotheca Martiniana. A Catalogue of the Entire Library of the Late Eminent Antiquary Mr Thomas Martin, of Palgrave, in the County of Suffolk. Containing some Thousand Volumes in every Language, Art and Science, a large Collection of the scarcest early Printers, and some Hundreds of Manuscripts...* Which will begin to be sold very cheap, on Saturday June 5, by Martin Booth and John Berry, Booksellers, At their Warehouse in the Angel-Yard, Market-Place, Norwich, and continue on Sale only Two Months [...] (Norwich: publisher unknown, 1773), [ii], p. 177: 'On [Martin's] death in 1771, John Worth, a local chemist from Diss, purchased [Martin's] remaining library with all other collections for 660 pounds, a fraction of their true value. The printed books were immediately sold to Booth & Berry of Norwich for £330; they in turn then produced this fixed price catalogue, which marked up to more than £2,000. The catalogue covers all the learned subjects, with an emphasis on British history'. In 1791 the *Confessio* manuscript came into the possession of John Patterson, esq., who possibly sold it to Frederick Howard.



inscribed, while the Latin is minimized with abbreviations. During the time of Newberry's inscription and into the Renaissance, it is Gower's eloquence in his native vernacular that so many authors praised, while his Latin poetry, spuriously maligned when contrasted with classical verse, declined in popularity. We have witnessed Thomas Berthelette's commendations of the purity of Gower's English, unsullied (in the printer's estimation) by the infiltration of foreign words and new coinages based on morphemes in other languages. For Gower, fluent in English, French, and Latin, composing poems in the language/s suitable for a particular genre, and functioning in various strata of medieval life that required constant code switching, relationships among the *tres linguae* depended on contexts both social and textual. In Berthelette's praise of the *Confessio Amantis*'s language, however, there is disapproval of fluid relationships among England's languages and an attempt to extract the native vernacular from the Latin that the publisher nevertheless printed and that readers nonetheless deployed in language learning.<sup>55</sup> And yet, while Gower's English was being set apart and raised above the Latin and French to which the poet more often set his stylus, Gower's reiterative English was, on the other hand, being firmly fixed in Latin foundations.

Demonstrations of the benefits that Gower's English derives from Latin exist in both Ben Jonson's *English Grammar* and Shakespeare and Wilkins's *Pericles*, the former illustrating how phrases from the *Confessio Amantis* accord with the rules for Latinate descriptions of English syntax and the latter emphasizing how the force of Gower's great English narrative derives from Latin models. By situating Gower's writing style and narrative voice in Latin traditions, Jonson, and Shakespeare and Wilkins lent even more ancient authority to Gower's rhetoric and harked back to a culturally constructed origin of either correct speech or historical resources. In their gestures toward origins, whether in the genesis of good grammar and style or of compelling stories, Jonson, and Shakespeare and Wilkins indicate that repetitive patterns reel away from their source and that Gower re-inscribes many of these patterns in order to reconnect with original authorities. Just as the Newberry manuscript emphasizes anaphora and the repetitions serving interpretations by a reader / editor who reshuffled the *Confessio*'s pages, both Jonson and Shakespeare / Wilkins promote reiterations by Gower. They especially endorse Gowerian replications that are grounded in Latinity, Jonson by exemplifying correct syntax through quotations of Gower with recurring patterns and Shakespeare/Wilkins by personifying the power of retelling in the figure of Gower, authorial presenter to *Pericles*.

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<sup>55</sup> Echard, *Printing the Middle Ages*, p. 101.

Ben Jonson's *English Grammar* written in 1617, but published posthumously in 1640, codifies connections among Gower's limpid English, expertise in Latin, and the ability to compose compelling phrases marked by repetition.<sup>56</sup> The *English Grammar*'s late circulation launches Gower's reputation as poet of an imitable vernacular, a reputation we have seen promulgated by Berthelette, into the waning years of the Renaissance. In fact, Berthelette's praise for Gower's language most probably influenced Jonson, since both Berthelette's 1532 and 1554 editions of the *Confessio Amantis* were much more available during Jonson's era than Caxton's earlier printing, and Jonson most likely read Berthelette's Dedication to Henry VIII in which Gower is described as a lantern for English writers.<sup>57</sup> Jonson's respect for Gower goes far beyond Berthelette's approval of the medieval poet's language or vast knowledge, however. It extends to the imitation of Gowerian plots and an exaltation of Gower in the English canon. It can also be seen in *Volpone*, where Jonson inserts a tale from the *Confessio*'s Book 5 into the action, and in the masque *The Golden Age Restor'd* in which Gower, among other poets, speaks in chorus about the Golden Age of English poetry.<sup>58</sup> Even claiming a seductive appeal for Gower's writings, Jonson warns in *Discoveries* that both Gower and Chaucer are so fascinating as to cause an obsession with medieval literature in those who do not limit their reading of the *Confessio Amantis* or *Canterbury Tales*.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps channelling his own fascination with John Gower, Jonson employs more examples from Gower's *Confessio Amantis* in the *English Grammar* than from any other text.

While certainly focusing on the English language in the *English Grammar*, Jonson makes it clear through lengthy quotations of Latin authors and through the Latin rubrics by which correct English is judged that knowledge of Latin is critical to understanding Gower's vernacular and that Gower's understanding of Latin grammatical principles made his English bright. Throughout the *English Grammar*'s entire First Book, establishing basic principles of English such as orthography and parts of speech,

<sup>56</sup> C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, corrected edition, 11 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 8, p. 455. The late publication of the *English Grammar* has been blamed on the fire that destroyed Jonson's house in 1623. See Clifford Leech, 'Ben Jonson: English Writer', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Ben-Jonson-English-writer>>.

<sup>57</sup> R. F. Yeager, 'Ben Jonson's *English Grammar* and John Gower's Reception in the Seventeenth Century', in *The Endless Knot: Essays on Old and Middle English in Honor of Marie Borroff*, ed. by Teresa M. Tavormina and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), p. 232.

<sup>58</sup> According to Kenneth Friedenreich, CA 5, ll. 2643–825, 'The Tale of the Covetous Steward' from *Roman des Sept Sages* provides material for *Volpone*. See, Kenneth Friedenreich, 'Volpone and the *Confessio Amantis*', *The South Central Bulletin*, 37.4 (Winter 1977), 147–50. For *The Golden Age Restor'd*, see Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, 7, p. 425.

<sup>59</sup> Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, 8, p. 618.

Jonson intersperses English rules and *exempla* with extended quotations in Latin from Cicero, Quintilian, Martianus Capella, Julius Caesar Scaliger, Peter Ramus, and more. Since Jonson partly intended the *English Grammar* for 'strangers', foreigners who lived and worked in England and had a much better command of Latin than English, the Latin quotations had a practical function in communicating the basics of English to those who desired fluency for commerce and society.<sup>60</sup> In addition, as R. F. Yeager points out, the Latin quotations from a range of experts on grammar and rhetoric also appealed to humanists whose approval Jonson sought.<sup>61</sup> By dignifying English with a learned analysis and scholarly presentation, Jonson aligned himself with British humanists who had previously applied their classical preparation to pedagogical treatises for English, humanists such as Richard Mulcaster, William Lily, Alexander Gill, and Sir Thomas Smith.<sup>62</sup> Significantly, in texts such as Mulcaster's *Elementarie*, these humanists based their English grammar and rhetoric teachings upon their understanding of classical Latin, and Jonson followed suit. Beyond the *English Grammar*'s extended quotations in Latin by experts in grammar and rhetoric, Jonson demonstrates that the basic principles of English are built upon the rules for Latin. For instance, according to Jonson, there are four classes of English verbs, just as there are four conjugations of Latin verbs. In addition, Jonson teaches that English nouns, like Latin nouns, decline, even though by Jonson's time, inflections for English nouns (in contrast to those in Latin) had drastically diminished. Regardless of such differences between the two languages, paradigms traditionally taught in Latin language studies underpin all of Jonson's discussions in the First Book of the *English Grammar*.

As the author who most often exemplifies the Latinate English characterized by Jonson, Gower is assumed to be a purveyor of Latin grammatical traditions and an expert in transmuting them into English expression. In exalting Gower to chief exemplar of good syntax in the *English Grammar*, Jonson may have been influenced and impressed by Gower's many compositions in Latin. As Yeager remarks, '[T]o Jonson, as to Berthelette, Gower was a kind of humanist *manqué*, whose great and unredeemable fault was having the ill luck to flourish in an ignorant time [...]. Gower's *Latinitas* would have been a persuasive factor for developing this view in Jonson.'<sup>63</sup> When English quotations from the *Confessio Amantis* begin to appear as models of proper syntax in the Second Book of the *English Grammar*, they reflect Jonson's method of teaching English sentence structure through Latin rubrics. For instance, Jonson is concerned about the

60 Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, Preface, 8, pp. 455–553.

61 Yeager, 'Ben Jonson's *English Grammar*', p. 228.

62 Yeager, 'Ben Jonson's *English Grammar*', p. 238.

63 Yeager, 'Ben Jonson's *English Grammar*', p. 234.

placement of the preposition in Gower's genitive phrases, such as 'the mother of erre', the constitution of articles (since there are none in Latin), and the construction of the infinitive, which in English (unlike Latin) must be introduced by a preposition.<sup>64</sup>

Jonson's quotations from the *Confessio Amantis* do more, however, than illustrate simple correctness or correlate Gower's English with Latin rules; they also open a window into Gower's rhetoric and particularly into the medieval poet's choices among the *genera dicendi* and his selection of an English plain style constructed with reiterative phrasing. In the Preface to the *English Grammar* Jonson signals his intention to prepare readers for rhetorical studies, whether for recognizing the principles of discourse in authors like Gower or for creating their own discourses. In the Preface, Jonson quotes and translates from Sir Thomas Smith's *Correct and Improved English Writing* in order to lay out the steps toward rhetorical instruction; Jonson declares, 'The nature of speech comes first; of oratory later.'<sup>65</sup> By demonstrating 'the nature of [English] speech' through a variety of authors, most often Gower, Jonson hoped to teach the 'Experience [that] breedeth Art', a fluency that might lead to rhetorical opportunities.<sup>66</sup> As Yeager has noted, the rhetorical practice most exemplified in Jonson's quotations from Gower is the plain style. Jonson's choice to emphasize Gower's simpler expressions coordinates the purposes of the *English Grammar* with those of the *Confessio Amantis*: both texts use the plain style to teach the 'pleine trouthe', whether about language or about love. Although the *Confessio Amantis* elevates the plain style through *repetitiones* that render instruction more pleasing and although the poem includes passages in a more ornate style, as we saw in Chapter Six when studying the petition to Venus, for the *English Grammar* Jonson highlights Gower's reiterations while avoiding the more aureate passages.<sup>67</sup> Jonson instead chooses to cite Gower's seemingly artless expressions that feature a basic English diction and different figures of repetition underscoring the moral significance of that diction. Even while Jonson seeks to impress humanists with Latinate analyses of the English language, he highlights the elements of the medieval poet's diction that derive from Old English and their contribution to the plain style.<sup>68</sup> By quoting from Gower's plain style and introducing these quotations with various rules for English syntax, Jonson teaches the grammatical building blocks for a rhetoric of the style that, in

64 Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, Preface, 8, pp. 530, 534–35, 543.

65 Thomas Smith, *De recta & emendata lingvæ Anglicæ scriptione, dialogus: Thoma Smitho equestris ordinis Anglo autore* [*Correct and Improved English Writing, a Dialogue: Thomas Smith, knight, English author*] (Paris: Robert Stephan, the King's Printer, 1568).

66 Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, Preface, 8, p. 465.

67 CA 7, l. 1638.

68 Yeager, 'Ben Jonson's *English Grammar*', p. 231.

Gower's case, relies on repetition to secure critical points in the reader's memory.

Jonson's preference for Gower's plain style consisting, as John Burrow explains, of 'simple words used in straightforward literal senses' reflects a trend in renaissance respect for a compelling but uncomplicated elocution.<sup>69</sup> During the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, many poets praised Gower's rhetorical manipulations, but as the Jacobean period approached, authors such as Jonson and Shakespeare were searching for models of eloquence that might roll more directly off the tongue on stage and in court. Whereas in the early sixteenth century George Ashby refers to Gower, along with Chaucer and Lydgate, as the 'most mellifluate' poets rendering a 'rude langage [...] clere illumynate' with 'ourgilt' expressions, writers such as Jonson and Shakespeare eschewed gilded verse that obscured the speaker's import with speech ornaments. In their rejection of 'ourgilt' expressions, they were reacting against not only the aureation expected by writers such as Ashby, but also the Euphuistic movement that was popular in the 1580s.<sup>70</sup> So named for John Lyly's *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* and *Euphues and his England*, Euphuism spread the impression that a cultured speaker must develop an ornate, dense, and allusive style.<sup>71</sup> Heirs to neither the fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century admirers of Gower's golden tongue nor to the Euphuists, Jonson and Shakespeare appreciated not so much the few embellished expressions in Gower's English, but instead the medieval poet's narrative incisiveness and clarity. They heard in Gower, not honeyed speech, but an effectively wrought discourse providing a counterpoint to the excesses popularized by the previous generation of English writers. Jonson and Shakespeare harked back to the age between the late medieval attraction to gilded rhetoric and the Elizabethan admiration for rhetorical curiosities to Berthelette's praise of Gower's uncluttered and wholly English expressions that constitute the plain style.

In addition to Jonson's admiration for clean poetic lines, he, like other renaissance speech theorists, approved of the plain style for many of the same reasons that Gower did: because of its associations with masculine ethics and potential to deliver a wide array of knowledge. Although in Gower, Marian rhetoric often supersedes masculinist discourses, the *Confessio's* Prologue according to 'John' and teachings on the sins against love according to Genius guarantee an overabundance of expressions in a manly plain style. According to Sandy Bardsley, the plain style

69 John Burrow, 'Gower's Poetic Styles', in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), p. 246.

70 George Ashby, *Active Policy of a Prince*, in *George Ashby's Poems*, ed. by Mary Bateson, EETS, e.s. no. 76 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1899), Prol. ll. 1–7.

71 John Lyly, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* and *Euphues and his England*, ed. by Leah Scragg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

offers a 'naked' text that communicates in forthright masculine utterance, while an aureate style presents a clothed text that sometimes covers the meaning with feminizing rhetorical ornament.<sup>72</sup> Associating the *English Grammar's* teachings in language with masculine formation, Jonson quotes from Gower's straightforward expressions concerning the development or decline of manhood, particularly of a man's strength and wisdom. For instance, in order to demonstrate 'of' as a possessive, Jonson quotes the following remark from *Confessio Amantis*, Book 1 on the inevitable decline of a man's physical powers: 'So that it proveth well therefore, / The strength of man is sone lore.'<sup>73</sup> While it is true that Gower uses 'man' to mean 'human', the human being he images in this statement is an able-bodied man. Through citations such as this, Jonson conveys the *Confessio Amantis's* preoccupation with Amans / John Gower's increasing age and debility, as well as presses for the remedy for physical decay: growing awareness of the inner spirit through confession. The inward man, like the plain style, is unadorned; the former may be expressed unaffectedly by the latter. In the *Confessio Amantis* internal awareness leads to the wisdom evinced by the poem's narrator in the end, when he concludes with promises to abandon foolish love and pray for England. Jonson, in his quotations from Gower, often reflects upon relationships between the wise man, such as the *Confessio's* lover comes to be, and others, as in 'Although a man be wise himselfe, / Yet is the wisdom more of twelve.'<sup>74</sup> With these passages, Jonson relates Gower's ideals concerning wise men and councils in which many sages gather together. Featuring quotations from Gower in the plain style, Jonson emphasizes masculinist spiritual, social, and political contexts.

A new kind of council for men, just beginning to form toward the end of Jonson's life, was the Royal Society, whose scientists preferred the plain style as the rhetorical means for conveying new discoveries clearly. Since even the most apparent and least stylistically wrought speech depends upon rhetorical figures, late renaissance thinkers valued the plain style's direct method of representation, deploying more transparent figures involving repetition that underscore new conclusions. These scientists endeavoured to articulate new knowledge in a style that divorced language from the mystical verbiage supposedly invoked by witches and magicians and, instead, reflected the immediate reality of the natural world under their investigations. It is significant that in order to convey scientific information, whether learning in the seven liberal arts promoted in the *Confessio's* Book 7 or the results of seventeenth-century experiments, both

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72 Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 173.

73 Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, Preface, 8, p. 530.

74 Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, 8, p. 542.

Gower and scientifically minded renaissance authors, as we saw in Chapter One, sought a writing style that eschewed the excesses of magical charms. However, while Gower pits necromancy against theology and continues to emphasize the mystical power of the W/word, renaissance thinkers such as Francis Bacon sought, according to Ryan J. Stark, 'a non-enchanted, [demystified] understanding of tropes [...]'.<sup>75</sup> From Gower's inclination toward the plain style for its superior ethos and adaptability to different discourses to Jonson's for its native, masculinist English to Bacon's for its transparency, there were many reasons in late medieval and early modern England to favour the 'naked text'. The examples of Gower's plain style that Jonson quoted in the *English Grammar* bare the medieval poet's meaning and underscore it with repetitions.

Figures of speech involving repetition naturally adorn the plain style by echoing and recapping important messages. In the *English Grammar* Jonson illustrates some of the reiterative figures possible in the plain style, figures such as *scesis onomaton* and *isocolon*, through his examples from the *Confessio Amantis*. For instance, Jonson shows that pairs of nouns and adjectives can work to redefine, extend, and underscore an idea; often these pairs are synonymous or similar in meaning as in *scesis onomaton*. Demonstrating the superfluity of nouns, for example, he quotes the following couplet from Gower using two similar nouns ('blame' and 'shame') to drive home the need to accept responsibility for one's own actions: 'For, whoso woll another blame, / Hee seeketh oft his owne shame'.<sup>76</sup> In other words, anyone who denounces another for wrongdoing will only have denunciation fall upon himself: as Jonson parses the sentence, both direct objects 'blame' and 'shame' similarly refer to the misconduct and disgrace of the fault-finder. Of course, to provide this lesson on a superfluity, Jonson needs at least two nouns, but not necessarily a pair such as 'blame' and 'shame' that redefine each other. He certainly does not require a reiterative noun pairing to teach comparatives, as in the following quotation from the *Confessio* that compares the condition of a fish out of water to that of land dwellers lacking air: 'No man, ne beast, might thrive'.<sup>77</sup> In this sentence, the noun pair 'man' and 'beast', rather than a single, more general noun such as 'creatures', emphasizes the widespread annihilation that would occur in a world without air. Jonson deploys adjectives as well as noun pairs from Gower's *Confessio* in order to highlight and establish an idea or situation; for instance, while demonstrating the adverb of likeness,

75 Ryan J. Stark, *Rhetoric, Science, and Magic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), p. 9.

76 Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, Preface, 8, p. 533. It is interesting that Jonson treats 'blame' as a noun in this passage, although it clearly constitutes part of the verb phrase 'woll blame'.

77 Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, Preface 8, p. 549.

Jonson quotes: 'Anone, as he was meeke, and tame, / He found towards his God the same.'<sup>78</sup> In this model sentence, the adjectives 'meek' and 'tame' operate much as the nouns 'shame' and 'blame' or 'man' and 'beast' in the exemplars noted before; 'meek' and 'tame' are adjectival restatements of a concept that Gower aims to encourage in the reader: a submissiveness rendering a person obedient to God.

Especially through noun and adjective pairs, Jonson illustrates the building blocks of *scesis onomaton* in Gower's plain style. Other repetitive syntactical units that foster the plain style in Gower, as Jonson shows, go beyond noun phrases and into the pattern and sometimes the duplication of an entire sentence type, as in *isocolon*. Jonson especially admires Gower's prepositions and conjunctions that forge parallelism or reiterations of sentence patterns, as in the following quotation from the *Confessio's* Book 1: 'Pride is of every misse the prick: / Pride is the worst vice of all wick' (Pride is of every wrong the sting: / Pride is the worst vice of all wickedness).<sup>79</sup> In these 'naked' lines, expressed in the simplest, most native diction, Gower, with a slight variation in word order, repeats the sentence type — 'Pride is \_\_\_\_\_' plus prepositional phrase beginning 'of' — in order to emphasize that pride, upon which Book 1 centres, is the first and worst of sins. These lines, it should be noted, also contain the anaphora so treasured in Newberry MS 33.5, since they begin with the same word, the key word for Book 1's moral lessons. In addition to emphasizing Gowerian *repetitio* involving prepositional phrases beginning with 'of', Jonson also features Gower's use of conjunctions (or the strategic lack of conjunctions) to join recurrent sentence structures. Jonson teaches polysyndeton (using more conjunctions than needed) and asyndeton (withholding a conjunction when expected) by way of citations from the *Confessio Amantis* meant to accentuate a point through repetition. For instance, in a citation from Book 4 — 'So, whether that he frieze, or sweat, / Or He be in, or He be out, / Hee will be idle all about' — Jonson quotes a polysyndeton with an overabundance of the conjunction 'or'. The repetition of 'or' emphasizes that no matter the choices concerning the human condition, a certain kind of sinner will nevertheless be idle.<sup>80</sup> The restated 'or' conveys the variety of situations and choices open to all humans who might be tempted by sloth. In an example from Gower of asyndeton, Jonson illuminates how the lack of conjunction yokes a studied repetition underscoring the inability of a human heart to be concealed from a dear family member: '[Her father] to whom her heart cannot heale, / Turne it to woe, turne it to weale' ([Her father] from whom her heart cannot be hidden / Whether

<sup>78</sup> Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, Preface, 8, p. 545.

<sup>79</sup> Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, Preface, 8, p. 539.

<sup>80</sup> Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, Preface, 8, p. 551.



it turn toward woe or wealth).<sup>81</sup> In this couplet, also featuring anaphora with the subjunctive ‘turne’, the conjunction ‘or’ is withheld, formally underscoring the lack felt by a heroine who feels powerless to hide emotion from her loving father. Among Jonson’s many masculinist citations of the *Confessio*, this passage emphasizes the paternal capacity for understanding a daughter, but rather than dwell on the formation of manhood, it develops the complex feelings of Thaise, one of Gower’s Marian rhetors studied in Chapter Three.

A linguistic analysis of the *Confessio Amantis*’s reiterative plain style is enabled by Jonson’s quotations and explications in the *English Grammar*. Through the textbook’s many examples from that poem, the *English Grammar* teaches the grammatical means by which Gower employs various *repetitiones* along with an Anglo-Saxon diction to express a masculinist ethics and drive home moral *sententiae*. Gower, Jonson, and other early modern thinkers would write in both English and Latin, but in the *English Grammar* and in the previous generations of authors who praised Gower’s rhetoric, it is the medieval poet’s vernacular that provides the best model. National pride, increasing institutional use of the vernacular, the printing of native authors, and more provide reasons to privilege the *Confessio*’s narrative language over its use of Latin, or to honour Gower’s mastery of English over that of other tongues. Nevertheless, the *English Grammar* proves that even in instruction in Gower’s vernacular, connections to the speech theories of ancient Romans and the paradigms for Latin were inescapable. Like the *Confessio Amantis* itself, the *English Grammar*’s code switching from English to Latin and back again demonstrates the interdependency of those languages in England, even when apologists for a native literature such as Berthelette or instructors of vernacular syntax would seek to separate them. The Latinity evident in the *English Grammar* is in itself a *repetitio* of important linguistic and rhetorical commentary from Cicero onward; through citations, translation of authorities, and historical literary models of correct syntax, Jonson reiterates traditions concerning effective speech and finds them also reproduced in Gower.

### ***Pericles: Et bonum quo antiquius, eo melius***

Like Ben Jonson’s *English Grammar*, Shakespeare and Wilkins’s *Pericles* shows an enhanced appreciation for the reiterations in Gower’s rhetoric. In *Pericles*, through the figure of ‘Gower’ the authorial presenter, Shakespeare and Wilkins dramatize what Jonson implies through the *English*

81 Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, Preface, 8, p. 550. The quotation in Jonson modernizes Gower’s language in CA 8, ll. 1729–30: ‘To whom hire herte can noght hele, / Torne it to wo, torne it to wele [...]’. The context here is Thaise’s inability to hide her feelings from her father Apollonius.

*Grammar's* model quotations from the *Confessio Amantis*: a Gower whose Latinity prepares him to create recurring and imitable English phrases. Despite Jonson's disparagement of *Pericles* as a 'mouldy tale', both he and Shakespeare (as well as the bard's collaborator) venerated Gower's plain *repetitiones* in the *Confessio Amantis*, the text upon which *Pericles* is based, their admiration arising from Elizabethan and Jacobean rhetorical training that set expectations for literary style and composition.<sup>82</sup> According to Joel B. Altman,

Dramatists of the period were trained in the discipline from their early grammar school days and [...] the evidence of this education can be found throughout their work [...] in the use of rhetorical forms used in school, in a predilection for debate, in frequently disconcerting shifts of viewpoint, and in an explicit preoccupation with the subject matter of rhetoric.<sup>83</sup>

Shakespeare and Wilkins may have been signalling an intent to emphasize rhetoric, since *Pericles*, refashioning Gower's 'Apollonius of Tyre', changes the hero's name to that of the famous Greek statesman and orator.<sup>84</sup> These playwrights chose Gower's narratives and language to represent mastery of rhetoric because the medieval poet had become a recognizable standard;

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82 Shakespeare and Wilkins's template for *Pericles* is 'The Tale of Apollonius of Tyre' in CA. 8; however, they also consulted one of Gower's sources, Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon*, as well as Lawrence Twine's *The Patterne of Painefull Adventures*. See Lawrence Twine, *The Patterne of Painefull Adventures*, ed. by W. C. Hazlitt in *Shakespeare's Library* IV, 2nd edn (London: Reeves and Turner, 1875); also in G. Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* VI (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 423–82. On the history of 'Apollonius of Tyre' and how it was adapted in the CA and in *Pericles*, see Elizabeth Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991).

83 Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 3.

84 Shakespeare would have read about *Pericles* in *Plutarch's Lives*, where he obtained the plots for *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. For discussions on the decision to change Apollonius's name, see J. M. S. Tompkins, 'Why "Pericles"?' *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 3 (1952), 315–22; Simon Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 48. As summarized by Geoffrey Bullough in his Introduction to the sources for *Pericles*, the hero's name change could have been influenced by a number of texts that either retell or advance plots similar to the Apollonius legend. He suggests, for instance, that there may have been a folkloric source for the connection between the hero Apollonius and the name 'Pericles'. In a French manuscript in Vienna, Apollonius takes on the name 'Perillie', perhaps assuming a disguise related to the grave dangers (Latin *pericula*) he has overpassed. In addition, Sidney's *Arcadia* features the association of Pyrocles with shipwrecks, pirates, and recovered armour. See Geoffrey Bullough, Introduction to *Pericles Prince of Tyre* in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 6, ed. by Geoffrey Bullough (London: Routledge, 1966), pp. 349–74, esp. pp. 355–56. Such associations with other texts do not preclude an intention by Shakespeare and his collaborator to allude to *Pericles*, the Greek statesman and orator.

as Helen Cooper explains: 'It was the decades from the 1590s down to 1640 that turned [Gower's] name into one not just to cite but to conjure with, for audiences both courtly and urban', and it was between these dates that both the *English Grammar* and *Pericles* were composed and published.<sup>85</sup> Besides the success of Berthelette's two editions of the *Confessio Amantis* and the many praises heaped upon Gower by a wide range of authors, Jonson, Shakespeare and other playwrights had local pride in the verbal magic of Gower, whose tomb was a prominent feature at St Saviour's, the local parish near the playhouses.<sup>86</sup> Since dramatists valued literary history and contemporary remediations of ancient texts for the stage, textual transmission and verbal duplication support each other in *Pericles*, making it possible for a good thing to become better with each hearing, better with age: 'et bonum quo antiquius, eo melius'.

Chapter Three of this book explores Shakespeare and Wilkins's imitation of Gower's Marian orators in Marina, and this chapter concentrates on their Gowerian repetitions. In *Pericles* Shakespeare and Wilkins go beyond a focus on grammatical and stylistic repetition found in the Newberry Manuscript and Jonson's *English Grammar*. Shakespeare and Wilkins take their cue from recurring plot elements in the ancient narrative of 'Apollonius of Tyre' — motifs including the threat of incest, shipwreck, and betrayal — and they imitate Gower's reiterative eloquence in reproducing them. Constructing a metatheory on the medieval poet's reiterations, they represent Gower's re-enactments of the past, revisions of older texts, recycling of plot lines, and repetitions of figural language through their invention of Gower the Chorus, a revivification of a versifier long dead.

In *Pericles*, Gower himself is a repetition, having returned from the grave to function as the play's chorus and 'sing a song that old was sung', announcing his purpose and emphasizing the diachronic continuity of his performance with the polyptoton and alliteration of 'sing / song / sung'.<sup>87</sup> The 'past' being entuned, according to Jonathan Baldo, is a healing air of the Middle Ages for a post-reformation audience traumatized by separation from traditions.<sup>88</sup> As Howard Felperin remarks: 'When Ancient Gower walked onto the stage as Chorus, a Jacobean audience would have been immediately aware of the archaism of the device' recalling the *doctus*

85 Cooper, "'This worthy olde writer'", p. 99. For a complete list of all citations of Gower's name during this period, see Spurgeon, 'Chaucer Criticism and Allusion'.

86 See R. F. Yeager, 'Shakespeare as Medievalist: What it Means for Performing *Pericles*', in *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Performance and Adaptation of the Plays with Medieval Sources or Settings*, ed. by Martha W. Driver and Sid Ray (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), pp. 215–18.

87 *Pericles*, Act I, chorus i, l. 1.

88 Jonathan Baldo, 'Recovering Medieval Memory in Shakespeare's *Pericles*', *South Atlantic Review*, 79.3–4 (2015), 171–89.

of a medieval morality play.<sup>89</sup> While *Pericles* certainly invokes the late English Middle Ages, the plot also echoes ancient times and contemporary renditions, as it rebounds from the *Historia Apollonii* to Gower's translation of its retelling in Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon* and to other early modern treatments of the Apollonius tale, such as Lawrence Twine's *The Patterne of Painful Adventures*.<sup>90</sup> Shakespeare's 'Gower' promises to 'tell you what mine authors say', and the resounding effect of multiple authorial voices speaking Shakespeare's lines must have been at its most intense when Shakespeare played the character of 'Gower'.<sup>91</sup>

Shakespeare and Wilkins set out to replicate Gower's facility with translating old books for new audiences. Rita Copeland declares Gower's vernacular translations hermeneutic acts, an inventive appropriation of a traditional text that leads to what she calls 'secondary translation', a version whose differences from its source create new meaning.<sup>92</sup> Translating 'Apollonius of Tyre' largely from Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon*, Gower removes the tale from a history of the world and redeploys it as an *exemplum* of incest for a lover's confession; he alters Godfrey's emphasis on mother-daughter relationships to inspect various interactions between fathers and daughters.<sup>93</sup> In so doing, Gower highlights the salvific rhetoric of Thaise,

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89 Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 145. In Felperin's view, 'Gower' is the *doctus* who controls the message concerning *Pericles*, an Everyman who falls from innocence in Antiochus's court, and models the moral commentary that other characters and the play's viewers must make. While Shakespeare's 'Gower' is certainly an embodiment of medieval didactic traditions, he is also, according to Walter F. Eggers, Jr., a construct of Elizabethan and Jacobean expectations for authorial presenters. Eggers documents the prevalence of authorial presenters, though we must note here that Shakespeare includes them in no other play. By appearing frequently on the stage to direct the narrative, offer a moral, and insist that the authors are the storytellers of their own compositions, Shakespeare and Wilkins's 'Gower' follows the likes of 'Lydgate' in *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1585) and 'St Dunstan' in *Grim, the Collier of Croyden* (1600). Shakespeare and Wilkins's 'Gower' also anticipates 'Homer' in *The Golden Age* (1609–11) and Raynulf Higden' in *Hengist, King of Kent* (1615–20). See Walter F. Eggers, 'Shakespeare's Gower and the Role of the Authorial Presenter', *Philological Quarterly*, 54.2 (Spring 1975), 434–43.

90 Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre*. Hazlitt, 'Shakespeare's Library', pp. 248–334.

91 CA 8, ll. 271–72. *Pericles* Act I, chorus i, l. 20. For a discussion of Shakespeare's playing Gower the presenter's role, see Stephen J. Lynch, 'The Authority of Gower in Shakespeare's *Pericles*', *Mediaevalia*, 16 (1993), 374.

92 Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 202–20.

93 Gower may also have seen a manuscript of the *Legenda Aurea* that included the tale of Apollonius. The *Legenda* is Twine's source, so Shakespeare certainly had access to that version of the Apollonius story, even if at second hand. On mothers and daughters in Godfrey, see Thomas Foester, *Godfrey of Viterbo and his Readers: Imperial Tradition and Universal History* (London: Routledge, 2016), fn. 96; on fathers and daughters in the *Confessio Amantis*, see Maria Bullón-Fernández, *Fathers and Daughters in Gower's Confessio*

*virgo bona dicendi perita*, in the face of difficulties imposed by her father's itinerant life. *Pericles* celebrates Gower's ability to render Latin versions of 'Apollonius' into Middle English and then to 'appear' again to make the rendering sensible for contemporary viewers. The play simultaneously honours Gower's guidance through the figure of the authorial presenter and Gower's rhetorical translations through inventive adaptations.

Because 'Gower' the authorial presenter delivers eight speeches in *Pericles*, it is this liminal rhetoric that provides the first and most obvious impression of the medieval poet's reiterative translation and oratory. As 'Gower' steps onto the stage, he is the sort of early theatrical presenter studied by Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, who 'operates as text, actor, and performance' at the same time that he stands on the side lines ushering the audience into a fictional world.<sup>94</sup> Commanding viewers' attention through insistent repetition, 'Gower' often occupies stage right or left while his words continually direct the audience's eye to the main action in the centre. Both intermediary and prophet who knows the plot to come, 'Gower' uses an expression from Ezekiel and Timothy in Act IV to compare himself to a divine intercessor: he locates his position as standing 'i' the gaps to teach [...] / The stages of our story'.<sup>95</sup> In this way, Shakespeare and Wilkins characterize 'Gower' according to the medieval poet's ethos of 'John', a narrative melding of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist studied in Chapter Two. In *Pericles* 'Gower' is located between earthly and heavenly worlds, between literary media and chronological periods.

In addition to the scriptural allusion, the 'gaps' are narrative breaches when the action occurs behind the scenes or in dumb shows, and the 'stages' reflect both the story's progress and the many settings. Reiterative eloquence stuffs the 'gaps' with information the audience should not miss, while reminders of where the action has taken place and where it is headed transition spectators to new actions and scenes. Since the authorial presenter's verbal guidance conducts viewers first to Antioch and then to Tyre, Tarsus, Pentapolis, Ephesus, and Mytilene, Laurena Laureano Domínguez emphasizes the need for a Chorus in *Pericles*, where time and geographical

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*Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 130–72. For a comparison between Godfrey's *Pantheon* and Gower's 'Tale of Apollonius of Tyre', see Thari Zweers, 'Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon* and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: The Story of Apollonius Retold', *Accessus*, 5.1 (2019), <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/accessus/vol5/iss1/3/>>.

94 Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 33–59. See also Kelly Jones, '“The Quick and the Dead”: Performing the Poet Gower in *Pericles*', in *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Performance and Adaptations of the Plays with Medieval Sources or Settings*, ed. by Martha W. Driver and Sid Ray (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), pp. 201–14.

95 *Pericles*, Act IV, chorus v, ll. 8–9. See Ezekiel 22. 30 and 1 Timothy 2. 1.

travel make it challenging to follow the plot line, a far flung action similar to that of *Henry V*, to whose Chorus 'Gower' is often compared.<sup>96</sup> Time and geographical travel put pressure on the audience's credence and ability to follow, so the presenter must shore up trust and attention by repeated assertions of authority and numerous gestures of *captatio benevolentiae*.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, 'Gower' in the introduction to *Pericles* begins a discursive pattern that will become a refrain: he asserts the authority inherent in wide reading, former authorship, and moral condemnation, and he captures the audience's good will by promising restoration, pleasure, and moral justice. Specifically, in the introduction he declares his literary powers to have arisen from 'ancient ashes', points out the many recurring 'festivals' at which the current tale was 'sung', reminds that many with 'infirmities' have found their 'restoratives' herein, and inveighs against the licentiousness in Antioch.<sup>98</sup>

A dynamic speaker, 'Gower' changes the cadences and diction of his speeches to suit the action but maintains the *repetitio* that reinforces the messages he intends to impart. For instance, condemning the incestuous princess of Antioch in an *epistrophe*, 'Gower' ironically repeats at the end of two verses the position for which she is desired by other princes, as 'a bedfellow / In marriage pleasures playfellow'.<sup>99</sup> Derek Pearsall has noticed that 'Gower's' words in Acts I and II are often 'archaic' but achieve a more contemporary register by Act III; that the presenter's meter, a 'jog-trot of imitation octosyllabic[,] gives way to a vigorous pentameter'.<sup>100</sup> While Pearsall and others regard these vacillations as a sign of Shakespeare's irregular interventions into the composition of the authorial presenter's lines, the flexible diction and rhythm can also be understood as a rhetorical attempt to prepare the audience through commentary for each scene. There may be good reason, for instance, for antiquated language and tetrameter rhymes in the opening acts and elsewhere to establish the medieval style of storytelling and didacticism, and for more contemporary language and verse to stir up the narrative crises surrounding Marina in Act IV. Nevertheless, any analysis of the choral speeches must acknowledge what

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96 Lorena Laureano Domínguez, 'Pericles' "unknown travels": The Dimensions of Geography in Shakespeare's *Pericles*, *Sederi*, 19 (2009), 74. According to Lorraine Helms, 'Gower's attempt to control the action across so many fields is doomed because of "theatrical indeterminacy"'. See Lorraine Helms, 'The Saint in the Brothel: Or, Eloquence Rewarded', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 41.3 (Autumn 1990), 330.

97 Bruster and Weimann, *Prologues*, pp. 58–9.

98 *Pericles*, Act I, chorus i, ll. 1–42.

99 *Pericles*, Act I, chorus i, ll. 33–34.

100 Derek Pearsall, 'Teaching Gower's Reception: A Poet for All Ages', in *Approaches to Teaching the Poetry of John Gower* (New York: MLA, 2011), p. 33. Many have commented on the changes in the quality of the play's language (not only the chorus's language) between Acts II and III, when Shakespeare seems more invested in writing or revising the script.

Pearsall's observations imply: that if the authorship of the play has been contested, the presenter's lines are especially so, with research showing that Wilkins might have written most of them.<sup>101</sup> Regardless of the Prologue's true author/s, however, the choral parts reflect an early modern appreciation for Gower's repetitive rhetoric, with 'Gower' functioning as a cultural memory, harking back to ancient tales, enlivening them with *repetitio*, resurfacing with repressed incidents of incest, and offering in Marina the reproduction of a chaste maid who can bear these memories into a textual future.<sup>102</sup>

Throughout, 'Gower' effects these reiterations with a common refrain: a promise to 'glad your ear and please your eyes'.<sup>103</sup> Relying on the judgement of his readers' eyes, 'Gower' fills their ears with information necessary to make determinations. Since the medieval author often fashioned himself an old and blind poet, *Pericles'* authorial presenter positions himself in the playgoer's ear and relies upon the audience's view.<sup>104</sup> The choral role distinguishes 'Gower' from other players who perform complex actions; the voice of his declamations takes precedence over his physical

101 Suzanne Gossett thinks it likely that Wilkins began to write the choruses and Shakespeare rewrote them. See Gossett, Introduction, pp. 69–70. However, despite Gossett's careful inferences and despite the data-driven analyses of MacDonald P. Jackson (MacDonald P. Jackson, 'George Wilkins and the First Two Acts of *Pericles*: New Evidence from Function Words', *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 6 [1991], 155–63), it is impossible to resurrect the compositional processes of Shakespeare and his collaborator or to know what took place between the play's production and its unauthorized publication in the First Quarto. My analysis assumes that both Shakespeare and a co-author approved the language of *Pericles* before the play was performed and that the First Quarto upon which all editions are based captures this language for the most part. Because the stylistic features serving to identify the first two acts as mostly Wilkins's also appear in choruses beyond the first two acts, Wilkins may have written the majority of the authorial presenter's lines. In fact, the only choruses without some signs of Wilkins's style are iv (Act IV) and vi (Act V). Wilkins's authorship is especially marked by the choices of assonance over rhyme as in iii (Act III) (moon / dooms) and the use of gerundive infinitive phrases as in v (Act IV. sc. 4). See Gossett, Introduction, pp. 69–70.

102 On Shakespeare's 'Gower' as an embodiment of medieval memory, see Baldo, 'Recovering Medieval Memory', pp. 171–89.

103 *Pericles*, Act I, chorus i, l. 4.

104 On Gower's self-representations of blindness, see R. F. Yeager, 'Gower in Winter: Last Poems', in *The Medieval Python: The Purposive and Provocative Work of Terry Jones*, ed. by R. F. Yeager and Toshiyuki Takamiya (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 87–103; Jonathan Hsy, 'Blind Advocacy: Blind Readers, Disability Theory, and Accessing John Gower', *Accessus*, 1.1 (2013): <<http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&#x0026;context=accessus>>; Tory Vandeventer Pearman, 'Blindness, Confession, and Re-Membering in Gower's *Confessio*', *Accessus*, 1, no. 1 (2013): <<http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&#x0026;context=accessus>>.

movements.<sup>105</sup> As the play begins, 'Gower' offers the common refrain as a statement of intention: *Pericles* is meant, he says, '[t]o glad your ear and please your eyes' while bringing a tale that restores mind, spirit, and glory to humanity.<sup>106</sup> Often, 'Gower' guides the audience's vision as in choruses ii, iii, and v, when he presides over dumb shows, clearly demarcating the action for the eye through spoken verses. At other times, however, he gestures toward self-evident actions. Before the dumb show of *Pericles'* interactions with Cleon that precedes Act II, Gower announces that he will be silent while the players act: 'tidings [...] / Are brought your eyes. What need speak I?'<sup>107</sup> When the dumb shows do not fully explicate events, but reveal actors like 'motes and shadows [who] move awhile', Gower promises his audience: 'Your ears unto your eyes, I'll reconcile.'<sup>108</sup> In addition, when texts such as the letters in choruses ii and iii or the inscription on Marina's tomb in v are brought on stage, 'Gower' must read them for the ear before the actors can convey the consequences of these texts' contents to the eyes. Assonance and alliteration in the presenter's speeches show a special attention to the audience's hearing and the playwrights' investment in the mellifluous reiterations of the presenter's voice.

Having the viewers' ear, 'Gower' impresses his message upon them with various kinds of repetitions, like the refrain of 'eye and ear'. His language is plain but doubled so that the audience will not miss the meaning. For example, wanting to compare *Pericles* favourably to Antiochus, Gower declares the former a 'better prince and benign lord', to bear upon Marina's hardships, he describes her 'woe and heavy welladay', and to herald her happiness in a reunion with her father, he rejoices over '[w]hat pageantry, what feats, what shows, / [w]hat minstrelsy and pretty din' was prepared in Mytilene.<sup>109</sup> These quotations from various acts reiterate synonymous noun phrases (*scesis onomaton*) in parallel structures like those admired by owners and teachers of the Newberry Manuscript and by Ben Jonson in the *English Grammar*. Another way in which Shakespeare's 'Gower' employs repetition as a teaching tool is through the reminders embedded into the beginnings of most of his speeches. Each Prologue looks back to the previous act with a rehearsal of where the last scene left off, with 'Gower' functioning as the audience's memory. Act II begins, for instance, with a reminder that Act I had focused on the sin of incest, and Act IV with one about the whereabouts of the principal characters. As a summation

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105 'Gower' the Prologue may have appeared in *Pericles* as he is figured on a woodcut displayed in Wilkins's *The Painfull Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre*: wearing an old-fashioned coat and carrying bays.

106 *Pericles*, Act I, chorus i, l. 4.

107 *Pericles*, Act II, chorus ii, ll. 15–16.

108 *Pericles*, Act IV, chorus v, ll. 21–22.

109 *Pericles*, Act II, chorus ii, l. 3; Act IV, chorus v, l. 52; Act V, chorus vii, ll. 6–7.



of the whole play, the Epilogue is the most reiterative of all the orations of 'Gower', and there he emphasizes what the audience has 'heard'.<sup>110</sup> Significantly, the first four sentences of the Epilogue deploy anaphora to underline these lessons: 'In Antiochus' and his daughter the audience should note 'monstrous lust', '[i]n Pericles, his queen and daughter' virtue, '[i]n Helicanus' 'truth [...] faith [...] and loyalty'.<sup>111</sup> The repetition of the initial prepositional phrase reminds the audience that in *Pericles* characterization constitutes exemplification.

The *repetitiones* filling the 'gaps' and the viewers' ears are often reconstructions of the Latin marginal glosses for the *Confessio Amantis*. *Pericles*, like Ben Jonson's *English Grammar*, proves that Gower's ability to be better and make a tale better with age — to appeal, even, to an audience whose 'wit's more ripe' — depends upon the medieval poet's facility with reproducing Latin literature.<sup>112</sup> Gower's Latinity is clear not only in the creative translations he performs of Latin texts such as the anonymous *Historia Apollonii* and Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon*, but also in the Latin commentary that fills the *Confessio*'s margins in both manuscript copies and Berthelette's editions. This prose commentary summarizes the Middle English matter, sometimes in contradictory ways, and often carries on a lively dialogue with the poem. In the case of the commentary on 'Apollonius of Tyre', Shakespeare and his collaborator seemed to recognize that it spotlights incestuous infractions and thus Gower's imaginative recasting of Viterbo's tale for use in a confession. They must have recognized the *Confessio*'s Latin commentary as a significant vehicle for Gower's voice because they made it the matter for many of the presenter's speeches. Gower's use of Latin commentary and Shakespeare's appropriation of it for his authorial presenter's speeches does not suggest Latin's superior authorization of the material, but rather, the recursive power of exchanges between the two languages. This is the power taught in medieval and early modern education through 'Latins' exercises that pose the challenge of translating first sentences and finally entire canonical texts back and forth from Latin to English, English to Latin. Mastery of such exercises was proof of civility and literary understanding, and patience in attaining such competency was based on the belief 'Et bonum quo antiquius, eo melius'. The Latin proverb functions as a shorthand for the work of 'Gower' in bringing the *Historia Apollonii* and *Pantheon* to light for different eras of English speakers and for his Latin commentary that is incorporated into the Jacobean Prologue's moralizations.

Speaking appealing refrains from the margins, in an additional echo from the past, Shakespeare's 'Gower' voices the Latin marginal glosses

110 *Pericles*, Act V, Epilogue, l. 1.

111 *Pericles*, Epilogue, ll. 1–10.

112 *Pericles*, Act I, chorus i, l. 12.

from the *Confessio Amantis*. From the beginning of the play Gower the presenter takes his lines from the pertinent Latin gloss from 'Apollonius of Tyre' or from a combination of Latin gloss and Middle English lines. The second half of the presenter's first speech, for instance, poetically renders the *Confessio*'s first gloss on 'The Tale of Apollonius of Tyre':

Hic loquitur adhuc contra incestuosos amantum coitus. Et narrat mirabile exemplum de magno Rege Antiocho, qui vxore mortua propriam filiam violauit: et quia filie Matrimonium penes alios impedire voluit, tale ab eo exiit edictum, quod si quis eam in vxorem peteret, nisi ipse prius quoddam problema questionis, quam ipse Rex proposuerat, veraciter solueret, capitali sententia puniretur [...].

(Here he speaks moreover against the incestuous coitus of lovers. And he narrates a miraculous instructive example about the great king Antiochus, who, after his wife had died, violated his own daughter. And because he wanted to prevent the marriage of his daughter with any others, such an edict went forth from him, that if anyone should seek her as a wife, unless he first accurately solved a certain problem of a puzzle which the king himself had proposed, he would receive capital punishment [...]).<sup>113</sup>

Gower's Latin gloss might be compared to the following lines in the authorial presenter's introduction to *Pericles*:

- 17 This Antioch, then, Antiochus the Great [...].
- 21 This king unto him took a peer
- 22 Who died and left a female heir,
- 25 With whom the father liking took
- 26 And her to incest did provoke.
- 31 The beauty of this sinful dame
- 32 Made many princes thither frame
- 33 To seek her as a bedfellow [...].
- 35 Which to prevent he made a law [...]
- 37 That whoso asked her for his wife,
- 38 His riddle told not, lost his life.

It is clear from a side-by-side comparison of the *Confessio Amantis*'s Latin gloss on the opening of 'Apollonius of Tyre' and the first speech of *Pericles*' authorial presenter that after providing their fictional 'Gower' with a personal and historical introduction marked by assonance — 'From ashes ancient Gower is come' to tell a tale once popular at 'festivals', 'Ember Eves', and 'holy ales' — Shakespeare and his collaborator created a

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<sup>113</sup> CA 8, l. 271, Latin marginalia, trans. by Andrew Galloway.

versified English riff on the medieval poet's Latin prose summary.<sup>114</sup> While, because of Latin's robust verb conjugations, Gower's prose commentary can often assume a nominative, Shakespeare and Wilkins's translation exploits English's inability to do so and, repeating the Latin glosses, adds in several English *repetitiones*. These additions focus on the wicked Antiochus by naming him four times in *scesis onomaton* ('This Antioch', 'Antiochus the Great', 'This king', 'the father') where the Latin prose names him only twice; thus Shakespeare and Wilkins perform a reiterative translation in the style of Gower himself. Similarly, the Prologue to Act II refashions a series of short glosses about Helicanus, a farewell to Tarsus, and Apollonius's shipwreck on Pentapolis's shores; in addition, other speeches by 'Gower' adapt Latin glosses, Middle English lines from the tale, or a combination of both.<sup>115</sup>

Offering a rhyming redux of Gower's Latin prose, Shakespeare and Wilkins sought to infuse their Prologue's commentary with the moral purpose expected of 'Gower' and to imitate the medieval poet's sophisticated dialogue between commentary and narrative. That Shakespeare's audience honoured Gower's reputation for integrity can be seen in the popularity of *Greenes Vision* (c. 1590) in which moral Gower defeats bawdy Chaucer in a debate over the purpose of literature. In a fanciful exchange between the two poets constructed by Robert Greene, Chaucer tells a lively story of 'bonnie Kate of Grantchester' that Gower counteracts in one of beautiful Theodora, whose husband distrusts and banishes her, but finally converts to her Christian example.<sup>116</sup> In *Pericles*, the first pronouncement of moral Gower is inserted into the translation of the Latin gloss for the introductory speech. Of Antiochus and his princess, Gower exclaims, 'Bad child, worse father!' in an *auxesis* allowing the final, climactic phrase to establish blame. This is the sermonizing voice that adds to the Prologue's authority and that has been so often misunderstood by contemporary critics of the play. For instance, Jeanie Grant Moore criticizes 'the absolutes of [Gower's] medieval narrative [that] are complicated by a new re-enactment on the early modern stage.'<sup>117</sup> In readings of the Chorus such as Moore's, in which a renaissance / medieval binary always pits the sophisticated Shakespeare against narrow-minded medieval poets, critics often misapprehend the subtle interplay of medieval forms. In this

<sup>114</sup> *Pericles*, Act I, chorus i, ll. 2, 5–6.

<sup>115</sup> The Prologue for Act II, chorus ii includes poetical translations of Latin glosses from the *Confessio Amantis* 8, ll. 571, 585, and 634.

<sup>116</sup> Robert Greene, *Greenes Vision: The Life and complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene*, ed. by A. B. Grosart (rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), XII. 201–81.

<sup>117</sup> Moore, 'Riddled Romance', p. 34. Other critics with a negative view of 'Gower' the Prologue's aesthetic value and effectiveness include Lynch, 'The Authority of Gower in Shakespeare's *Pericles*', pp. 361–78, and Deanne Williams, 'Papa Don't Preach: The Power of Prolixity in *Pericles*', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 71.2 (Spring 2002), 595–622.

case, they have not reckoned with the complex dialogue taking place in the *Confessio Amantis* between the Latin summarizing / sermonizing and the Middle English narrative that Shakespeare and his collaborator sought to imitate. In the *Confessio Amantis* the Latin gloss quoted above that briefly summarizes the opening scenes of 'Apollonius' and condemns the incestuous pair also points to multiple ways of receiving the tale's lesson. While this Latin marginal gloss focuses sharply on Antiochus's fault, it is juxtaposed with a Middle English narrative considering the moral and physical struggles of the daughter, who is not only violated by her father, but given the worst advice possible by her nurse: that against the father's aggression 'ther is no bote, / So suffren thei that suffre mote'.<sup>118</sup> The stark Latin censure of the king cuts across the complicated processing and eventual acquiescence of the violated daughter; it encourages the audience to blame the father while acknowledging the complex circumstances leading the pair to repeat their sin. This is not reductive moralizing, but a humanizing morality, and in imitation of it, Shakespeare's 'Gower' entreats the audience to draw their own conclusions. The authorial presenter completes his first speech by invoking the moral discernment of the viewers: 'What now ensues, to the judgement of your eye / I give, my cause who best can justify'.<sup>119</sup>

The eight speeches delivered by 'Gower', often early modern English translations of the *Confessio's* Latin glosses, not only initiate and conclude the play's action, but also provide the structure throughout, reining in a plot governed by repeated patterns. As Suzanne Gossett notes, the First Quarto does not separate *Pericles* into acts, and the transitions marked by 'Gower' the presenter make better divisions than those imposed by modern editors.<sup>120</sup> As the herald of new episodes, 'Gower' marks off the story's important replications and reversals; before Act II, he stands between Pericles' failed pursuit of love in Antioch and happy marriage in Pentapolis; before Act V, scene 2, he parts Marina's experience of abuse under her foster mothers Dionyza and the Bawd with the heroine's bliss in reunion with Thaisa.<sup>121</sup> Because, as Richard Hillman points out, 'Gower' the authorial presenter is 'the most sustained literary allusion to be found in Shakespeare', it is natural that *Pericles* appropriates many of the rhetorical strategies involving repetition in its source and that 'Gower' the presenter deploys or points to these strategies.<sup>122</sup> In addition to imitating the *Confessio Amantis* by giving voice to the Latin commentaries and

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118 CA 8. ll. 339–40.

119 *Pericles*, Act I, chorus i, ll. 41–42.

120 Gossett, Introduction, p. 82.

121 Gossett, Introduction, p. 143.

122 Richard Hillman, 'Shakespeare's Gower and Gower's Shakespeare: The Larger Debt of *Pericles*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36.4 (Winter 1985), 428.

by invoking connections between sexual and spiritual matters, fortune and human responsibility, and music or oratory and healing, *Pericles* also highlights the recurring incest theme that so many have noted in Gower's 'Apollonius of Tyre'.<sup>123</sup> Critics since Northrup Frye have commented that even after the opening of the play featuring Antiochus and his daughter, incest remains a possibility, with motherless daughters Thaisa and Marina being in the same position as the princess of Antioch.<sup>124</sup> Gower the presenter often recalls the incest that took place in Antioch — in the Prologues to Acts I and II and in the Epilogue again. In this way, Gower repeats himself and sustains the audience's memory, underscoring the parallel episodes in which Pericles and Marina seek appropriate and nurturing family units that contrast with the incestuous union in Antioch.<sup>125</sup> With the incest motif, as well as with multiple shipwrecks, the repeated birth story of the play's heroine, and other recurring folkloric *topoi*, as we have seen in Chapter Three, 'Gower' controls *repetitiones* at both the macro and micro levels of his narrative.

Constituting a re-enactment of ancient narrative and medieval hermeneutics that depends upon 'Gower's' Latin-English code switching, *Pericles* offers repetitions in plot line and characterization that encourage further retellings. The reiterations that it encourages go beyond duplications of the masculine, proverbial voices of Gower and Shakespeare / Wilkins to feminine reiterations in the figure of the hero's daughter, Marina, herself a reproduction of her parents' suffering, her rousing oratory, as we saw in Chapter Three, a re-instantiation of the Gowerian plain style, and her chaste existence a revival of Marian purity.<sup>126</sup> For the authors of *Pericles*, Gower's 'Apollonius of Tyre', plain style, and virginal rhetorician contribute to effective repetitions that bear repeating into the next age, and it may be that one of the authors, George Wilkins, took the invitation seriously when he modelled *The Painfull Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre* on the play.

Like Jonson, Shakespeare and Wilkins explain in Latin — with the maxim 'Et bonum quo antiquius eo melius' — why Gower, a Latinate author and transmitter of great literature, should be revered and revived, literally repeated. Not only has the medieval poet's *Confessio Amantis* survived the centuries and made a literary success in Berthelette's editions,

123 On the ways in which *Pericles* imitates the *Confessio Amantis*, see Hillman, 'Shakespeare's Gower', pp. 432–37. On the prevalence of the incest theme in the *Confessio*, see Georgiana Donavin, *Incest Narratives and the Structure of Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Victoria, B.C.: ELS, 1993).

124 Northrup Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 44.

125 Gossett, Introduction, p. 143.

126 On scholarship concerning daughters and their importance to Shakespeare, see Jennifer Higginbotham, 'Shakespeare and Girlhood', *Literature Compass*, 10.2 (2013), 189–200.

but Gower's capacities as translator and Latin commentator have allowed him to enter the cycle of recapping and refashioning whereby he 'himself' can be recycled as a good thing made better with time for the early modern stage. In sum, *Pericles* associates Gower's rhetoric with Latinate conventions involving repetition by highlighting the master reiteration in which one writer translates another's narrative or commentary, marking out junctures in recursive plot lines involving family formation and incest, and placing examples of repetitious figures of speech as well as refrains and reminders in the speeches of the authorial presenter. 'Gower' the Prologue is the most obvious voice for the medieval poet's rhetoric, an embodied *repetitio*.

## Conclusion

*Pericles* effects a personal restoration through the rhetoric of repetition, returning the audience to the Middle Ages, to Gower's narratives, to the re-establishment of *Pericles*' domestic peace, to recollection. Committing the *Confessio Amantis* to memory and making its rhetoric one's own seems to have been the project of not only Shakespeare and his collaborator, but also Ben Jonson, and the owners of Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5: the Goldsmyth, Cok, and Bold families and beyond. All these readers, in their own ways, perpetuated Gower's repetitive plain style by declaiming phrases with anaphora, teaching English through reiterative figures of speech, or considering how replication is a foundational principle of discourse. In Newberry MS 33.5, reiterative figures underscore a new understanding of the field of rhetoric that is presented in alliance with theology and in sharp contrast to necromancy, in the *English Grammar* they provide the building blocks of syntax, and in *Pericles* they construct the authorial presenter's voice, recurring phrases, and the master repetitions that govern Shakespeare and his collaborator's retelling of Gower's 'Apollonius of Tyre'. Although late medieval and early modern manuscript owners, scholars, and playwrights who retold Gower's retellings may have privileged the *Confessio Amantis* and its English narratives over Gower's poems in other languages, they also respected and imitated Gower's Latinity. They reworked the *Confessio*'s Latin glosses and verses to provide contexts for the Middle English narratives, applied teachings from Latin rhetorical texts that shed light on Gower's accomplishments, and followed methods for translating and adapting a Gower learned in Latin instruction. Gower deployed a variety of rhetorical arts when composing poems in three languages; when repurposing Gower's work, late medieval and early modern readers recalled and reproduced the Latin underpinnings of those reiterative arts.

## A General Comparison of the Orders of the Fairfax Manuscript and the Newberry Manuscript

FAIRFAX	NEWBERRY
BOOK SIX	
Opens the treatment of <i>gula</i> by inveighing against drunkenness and specifically drunkenness in lovers, who 'daunce and singe / The hove daunce and carolinge' (6, ll. 143–44) Drunkenness connected to deceit.	Same
Exempla of love drunkenness	Missing
Sorcery and deceit -On magicians Exempla on sorcery -Ulysses and Telegonus' -Nectanabus'	Same
-Zoroaster' -Saul the Witch'	Missing
Amans's request to hear Aristotle's instructions to Alexander	Missing
BOOK SEVEN	
Genius commits to lecturing on Aristotelian love	Moved toward the back of the codex
Theory -Theology -Physics -Mathematics -Four-fold Creation -Astronomy -Seven Planets	Moved toward the back of the codex
-12 Signs of the Zodiac -15 Stars	First material presented from Book 7 Connected to the exempla on sorcery
Rhetoric Practice	Moved back 6 leaves
-Truth -Esdras -Alcestis Practice cont. -Largesse	Moved back 4 leaves

FAIRFAX	NEWBERRY
-Julius & Poor Knight -Antigonus	
-Diogenes	Resumes here after 15 stars
-Roman Emperors -Emperor & Masons -Ahab -Justice -Tales of various secular Rulers and First Lawgivers	Continues with same 3 exempla and introduction to Justice Gideon Saul & Agag David & Jacob Solomon's Wisdom
-Pity -Tales of Secular Rulers	Moved back 2 leaves Intervening is the following: -Truth -Esdras -Alcestis -Tales from Justice -Lycurgus -First Lawgivers -Pity (positive exempla) -Codrus -Pompey Rhetoric Practice
-Pity (negative exempla) -Siculus -Dionysius -Lichaon -Lion -Spartachus	Same
-Mountain & Mouse -A Time for War	Moved farther to the back of the codex. Replaced by 'Folly of Rehoboam', Wisdom and the King
-Pity (biblical exempla) -Gideon -Saul & Agag -David & Jacob -Solomon's Wisdom	Already presented under Justice
-Chastity -Sardona palus -David -Cyrus -Balaam -Solomon	-Chastity -Tarquin -Rape of Lucretia -Mountain & Mouse -A Time for War -Virginia



FAIRFAX	NEWBERRY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tarquin</li> <li>-Rape of Lucretia</li> <li>-Virginia</li> <li>-Tobias &amp; Sara</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tobias &amp; Sara</li> </ul>
<p>Already presented as the second part of policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Largesse</li> <li>-Julius &amp; Poor Knight</li> <li>-Antigonus</li> <li>-Conrad</li> <li>-Carmidotirus</li> <li>-Cambyses</li> </ul>
<p>Book Eight commences</p>	<p>Assorted leaves from Book Seven that had been discarded in the quires' rearrangement precede the commencement of Book Eight.</p>



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